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**PHELPS AND HIS
TEACHERS**



DAN V. STEPHENS



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Phelps and His Teachers

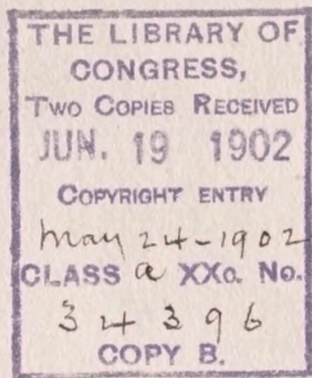
PHELPS
AND HIS
TEACHERS

BY
Dan V. Stephens
Author of
SILAS COBB

Decorations by
Nina E. Lumbard

Hammond Bros.
& Stephens
Fremont, Nebraska

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INTRODUCING PHELPS AND HIS TEACHERS.

N THE following sketches the aim of the author has been to bring teacher and patron to a better understanding of the child, and incidentally of each other. Most of our troubles arise from misunderstandings, followed by hasty acts and words. It is so easy to misunderstand a child because he has such a limited power of expression. He often stumbles in his effort to understand and master things—often expresses thoughts he does not have, and does things he does not mean to do. In a measure this is also true of his grown up friends.

So it follows that complaints are frequent—the child against the teacher and the teacher against the child; the patron against both and *vice versa*. Few of us are willing to concede to another an individuality that differs from our own.

This arrogance of spirit leads us to tyrannize over our weaker friends with a desire to make them conform to our notions of what they *should* be. Thus we fall into the habit of nagging, pruning, and otherwise affecting the character of the child and

each other when we are often in nowise competent to do so. It is not an uncommon thing for a genius to spring from a parent, who, ignorant and tyrannical, labors with fanatic zeal to crush out what seems to him to be a worthless characteristic. The world is filled with minds that could become great and helpful to humanity were their lots cast in a more congenial atmosphere where fanatics who imagine they, only, are in the right, could not trample them under foot.

The school and home should help the child's development along lines natural to his growth. This individuality should be considered. Let us get away from the idea that we own his life and can do with it as we please, and not be held responsible for our acts. Let us be sure that in our effort to make him grow straight and strong we do not make him grow crooked and weak. And above all, let us be charitable toward him and each other.

THE AUTHOR.

Fremont, Neb., June 1, 1902.



PHELPS IN THE FIRST GRADE

I



LONG before Phelps started to school—and he didn't start until he was seven years old—his mamma told him about his prospective teacher. Phelps was curious about her. Would she be like his mamma or Jimmie's mamma, who lived across the street? His mamma assured him his teacher would be a kind, sweet woman who would love him. And Phelps believed it. Even Phelps' mamma believed it, for how could any one fail to love *her* boy.

In time Phelps was seven years old and was duly kissed and sent to school. It was a red-letter day at his home. All day his mamma waited and thought about her boy at school and wondered how he was getting along. He was the center of the classes as he appeared in her mind's eye; the pride of the teacher and the school. She could not foresee that there might be other boys and girls there who were sweet and lovable. She could not foresee that the

teacher might be heartless—without a spark of love for children. She could not understand that any one would or could govern children without love. How blind is love! She had her awakening that day when Phelps came home. He was crushed and discouraged. The teacher was ill-tempered, bad-mannered, and short in judgment, yet because she knew her multiplication tables and a few other purely mechanical things, she had been given authority to teach.

“Why, mamma, the teacher whipped a little boy to-day, and slapped a little girl that sat next to me. She looks so cross, I don’t love her. You told me I would love my teacher, and that she would be nice, like you.”

Phelps’ mamma sat a long time looking out of the window and thinking. Her boy thought she had deceived him. She had taught him to think that everybody was good, kind, and loving. Because her heart was so full of it, she forgot her sad experience to the contrary. At any rate, everybody would be good to *her* boy—how could they help it? People who are good find lots of good rising up to meet them everywhere they go.

The next day Phelps came home and told his mamma another story of strife and worry at school. And the next was no better. It seemed that each day brought forth new adventure. It was ever a contest between the teacher and pupils. She had no love in her heart, and no love rose up to meet her. She had a heart full of selfishness and

fear—fear that the pupils would get the upper hand of her. The fear was the result of her selfishness. So her days were filled with strife—the bad that was in her calling forth all the bad that was in her school—all of it concentrated against her.

The children would go home at night and cry over their troubles with their teacher in their mammas' arms, where there was always sympathy to be found. Some mammas went to the teacher, others sent notes—all protesting. Then the day following would be worse. Not only selfish and cowardly, but narrow and ignorant, the teacher would radiate an aura of meanness around her so intense that all the love in the school would be driven into hiding. Even those bright little fellows who are always bubbling over with love and life would settle down dejectedly—while those others who inherit a little from the nether kingdom would be aroused to bitter resentment.

So the poor teacher in her ignorance was suffering severely as a result of it, and cultivating in the children, who might otherwise have had sweet dispositions, a bitter hatred for her and school life in general.

One day, after the teacher had been called upon by a few outraged parents in regard to her brutal and otherwise ignorant treatment of their children, she was unusually severe. Among the number who had protested was Phelps' mamma. She had done this unknown to the boy.

"Children," she began, with a deep scowl on her

face, "I want to talk to you about tale-bearing. You have been going home and telling things that you have no business to tell." And at this she glared at Phelps as if she would eat him at one gulp. "You have even lied—lied, do you understand?" Here she began to get red in the face and perspire. "I tell you, you have no business going home with tales about the school—tattlers! I'd be ashamed of myself!" At this period of her discourse she emitted a sneer of contempt and went on with her recitations.

Imagine the feelings of a mother who has thrown around her child every refined thought and influence within her power; kept sweet and even-tempered through the years of his babyhood; always spoken kindly to him, and always chided with love where reproof was necessary; all this in order that the good might grow and the bad might starve. Try to take her place just long enough to imagine your child sitting day after day under the influence of a mind like the one just described. The very idea of such a person being licensed to teach school and sent out to administer her poison in small doses to other people's children is shocking in the extreme.

That night Phelps went home crying. He told his mamma that the teacher had said that they were tattlers, that they told lies, and that *she looked right at him*, and that he just despised her. She tried to console him and soften his heart toward her. She told him how hard it was to manage so many pupils, and perhaps she was not feeling well.

It is so easy to be cross when we are not well and the children are not good. She told him it was wrong to despise any one. That he should not feel that way, but that instead he should feel sorry for her because of all the trouble she had to bear.

On Friday afternoon the teacher felt happy—the week's drudgery was about ended. To her school-teaching was drudgery. She did not love her work. She would gladly give it up at a moment's notice if a better position presented itself. So the only times she ever treated the children with consideration were on Friday afternoons, because of the joy she felt in the anticipation of having them off her hands for two days. In the midst of her pleasure she felt kindly toward everybody. The children brightened up under her smiles, and looked happy and contented. They were having a delightful time together. At the end of the session the teacher felt so good, surrounded by so much young life, and all of it reaching out for something to love and cling to, that she asked for the hands of all those who loved her. Every hand went up with an eager jerk and shake, so the teacher would not fail to see that each little heart went out to her—all save one, and that was Phelps. He sat crestfallen when he saw all eyes turned upon him.

"Why, Phelps, dear, don't you love me?"

"No ma'am," respectfully replied the boy.

"Why don't you, Phelps?"

"Just because."

"Don't you know why?"

"No ma'am."

She flushed red for an instant, probably angered at first, but seeing the frank countenance of the boy looking up at her, she felt a twinge of shame. That night she kept remembering that Phelps didn't love her. It annoyed her quite a little. On Monday she set about trying to make Phelps love her. She seemed to hunger for it. She was as kind as she could be, which was not saying much for *her*. But before the day was over she had patted Phelps' head once or twice and once she had put her arm around his shoulders.

That evening Phelps told his mamma that he and the teacher understood each other now. But it was only for a day. Some of us can be good for an hour, others for a day, others for a month, and some even for a life-time, but, unfortunately for her, she found it too difficult to be good—it was not worth while to waste so much effort just to win a child's love—so she drifted back to her old habits of scolding and whipping and looking ugly. It was easier for her to live that way. It was in accord with her own coarse nature, which was in close relationship with the clod.

Accordingly Phelps found he never understood her, or if he did it only lasted for a day. From a boy with an even, sweet temper he became nervous and excitable before the first month was over. Before the second month closed she took him out into the cloak-room one afternoon and whipped him. After this he hated her so much he did not learn

anything. His mamma had to compel him to go to school. Matters came to such a pass that his papa's attention was called to it. He had a talk with the boy. To his great surprise and sorrow the boy flew into a fit of passion and became ugly in the extreme. As the last recourse he was whipped for the first time in his whole life in his own home. This seemed to complete his degradation, and he went to school surly and rebellious. Ah! if people only knew how they sometimes commit a crime equal to that of taking a human life, they would study the ways of a child a long time before pouncing upon it as if they owned its life and had a right to abuse it.

Phelps' papa went to his work that day feeling like a brute. All day long his boy's face would mix in with his papers and what other work he might be doing. Often he wondered why he had never noticed this condition of mind in his boy. How was it that all through his short young life he had not known of this ugly disposition? When he went home to dinner he questioned his wife on the subject, and found an explanation for it all in the temperament of the teacher. This was a serious matter with them—much more than anything else in the world. It was the making or ruining of a life. Would they be able to make the teacher understand that they wished to cooperate with her in an honest endeavor to control the boy? Would she not misconstrue their efforts, and think they were not in sympathy with her?—that they did not

understand her troubles, and that parents are always fools about their children anyway? But Phelps' papa was no fool. He understood her weakness. He knew she was an uneducated girl with little experience and practically no conception of human nature. It was therefore with many misgivings that he went to see the teacher about it. They sat for an hour talking it over. The first three-quarters of that time he spent in strategy—playing for a position—trying to get into her way of thinking so as not to offend her—so that he might be able to show her the right way. He tried to get her away from the thought that he was against her, but through it all she was on the defensive. So strong was this animal instinct of defense in her she could not think of anything else. She could not understand a nature that was sufficiently unselfish not to want to sacrifice the interests of others for its own benefit. Finally he gave up trying to reach her by strategy, and concluded that perhaps it might be well to jar her a little, so he said:

“Miss———, my profession is the law; yours is school teaching. It ill becomes me, no doubt, to try to tell you how to teach school, just as it would be for you to tell me how to practice law. However, you have a chance to take your case to some one else in the event that I do not handle it properly. I haven't that privilege in your case. You are thrust upon me whether I like it or not, and you spoil my child's mind. The only way I can help myself is to keep the boy out of school. I came to

you in an honest effort to help you handle the boy, but you resent it, and do not even conceive of a possibility that you could do any better than you are doing. The boy never gave us a moment's trouble until you took him in charge, and now after three months his little mind is poisoned and his ideals destroyed. You even told him with the others that they carried lies home to their parents. Such talk and the ill-temper you display before your pupils are sufficient to bring out all the disagreeable traits of character in them. I deplore it, and heartily wish that you might do better, and get the children to like you so your work would be more effective."

"The children do like me," she replied emphatically. "No longer than a month ago they practically all held up their hands in response to that very question."

"All but my boy; why didn't he hold up his hand? Love answers to love and he did not respond to that sentiment."

"It's because he is encouraged to disobey me at home; that is why, exactly."

"There you are wrong again. Suspicions will destroy us sooner or later if we encourage them. I had to whip the little fellow yesterday as a result of your treatment of him. Yes, whip him—do you hear that, Miss——? The first time in my life I had to use the rod on my son as a result of the blighting influence you have had over him. He is almost unmanageable, and hates you with a vindictiveness that appalls me in one so young. You

irritate *me* even almost beyond my ability to control myself. You are not suited to the work. I say this to you candidly and with no intent to do you injury. You cannot understand the responsibility a parent feels for the future of his child."

They quit just where they began, save that the bitterness on both sides was intensified. Miss—— taught school just as she always did, and just about as she always will so long as weak, ignorant humanity will tolerate that sort of a thing. The responsibility of a teacher for good or ill is not appreciated by us as a people. The importance of the work of a county superintendent in selecting teachers is out of all proportion with that of any other profession. The professional skill required to save a human life in the face of a disease of the body is nothing compared to the cultivation of a human soul. A county superintendent who carelessly licenses a coarse, ignorant person to practice on little children is to be pitied because his crime is so great. First of all requirements in the character of a teacher should be the power to love children. Without it a teacher is a failure. In addition to this she should be refined and gentle, possessing an honest heart, clean habits and a good strong body. Then add to these a knowledge of books. If it is impossible to get the last with the first, take the first without hesitancy. It is infinitely better that the child miss the learnings of the wise men, rather than receive it from a vulgar, cross-grained teacher whose very breath is laden with a blighting poison.



PHELPS IN THE SECOND GRADE

II



AFTER a year of turmoil in Phelps' home and school, as a result of a constant warfare between himself and his teacher, he was promoted to the second grade. It was a day of great rejoicing on Phelps' part, but Phelps's mamma was not happy. She knew, or thought she did, that Marie Anderson, the second grade teacher, was not what she ought to be. In fact, she classed her among the heartless set, with the added sin of being conscious that she was a very pretty woman, and took a particular delight in attracting the opposite sex to her. Phelps' mamma was a very proper and conscientious woman, and had heard many scandalous stories about Marie Anderson during the ten years she had been teaching. These stories, of course, were not so very bad in the average person's judgment, but Phelps's mamma had no weakness in that direction, therefore had no charity. So many times in the decade past she had expressed

herself in a very uncomplimentary manner about the free and easy ways of Marie Anderson. So had many other people, for that matter. It was from other people Phelps' mamma got her information. She wasn't wicked enough to find it out first hand. Her neighbors and friends poured the poison into her mind regularly, and ten years of it counts up a little.

Therefore, taking into account all the worry and sorrow Phelps' mamma had passed through during his first year in the school under the care of the heartless teacher—seeing her carefully trained boy of seven develop into an ugly, hateful, revengeful lad at eight was quite sufficient to make her heavy-hearted, and almost soured on the public schools. She dreaded for school to begin, and had not even decided up to the very last day of vacation whether she would send him to school, or take the care of his instruction into her own hands. But Phelps' papa decided the matter. He told his wife that there was always some hope for the women that admired men—they had some feeling, at least. It is supposed he was thinking of his interview with Phelps' former teacher, and was contrasting her cold, ignorant face with the bright, intelligent countenance of Marie Anderson. So, with much dread of consequences, Phelps' mamma sent him to school. So far as Phelps was concerned, it is sufficient to say that he went to school in full armor, and was ready for battle at a moment's notice.

When Marie Anderson first came to town, ten

years ago, her cheeks were full of color, and her eyes flashed with the sparkle of youth. Not that she had lost her color now, or the sparkle in her eyes, but ten years had softened the general effect. She gave in her age, when she applied to the county superintendent for a certificate, to be eighteen years, and it was so recorded in the great register in his office. In an interview long afterwards the superintendent said he could scarcely recall the opinion he formed of her as a teacher that day, because of the fact that her face and figure took up most of his attention. He remembered only the strong effect left by her general appearance. She had a full, well-formed mouth, and a high forehead. Her face, as a whole, produced a general effect of strength. Her dress was modest, but withal so neat and well-made, it was a pleasure to look at her. She was above the average woman in size—enough so to be rather commanding in a crowd. Her complexion was as pure as crystal, with the most delicate suggestion of red in her cheeks and lips. In fact, she was a beautiful woman, and she knew it. She also knew that the men knew it. She could feel it in every glance. The pride she felt in her strength was very natural. A man feels that same pride in power when he holds the reins of a great enterprise and directs its affairs. The boy feels it when astride a horse or bicycle. The engineer feels it when tearing through the darkness on his engine. The thrill that comes with power is intoxicating. Marie Anderson took pride in the power she held

over men, but she did not lose her equilibrium. Just in the proportion that she excelled the average woman in that power the general talk about her conquests increased; not that she went out to make them nor yet that she made so very many, but because they wanted to talk about her. She was accomplished in many ways; could sing beautifully and dance, but no one, so far as Phelps' mamma ever knew, had ever said she was a good teacher. That point seemed to have been over-looked entirely, though there were children in the second and third year of the High school who had passed through the second grade under her instruction.

Phelps' mamma waited with great anxiety for her boy to return from school the first day. It is true mothers are all alike, but there are a few really great loving women who take the matter of educating their children seriously to heart, and if teacher could get a glimpse of their feelings they would put more thought and conscience into the conduct of their work. When Phelps came home his mamma hastened to ask him how he got along at school. His countenance fell at once as the thought of old battles at school, and the usual scene of sermonizing at home passed quickly in review before his mental eye.

"Purty well I guess," he replied.

"Did you have good lessons, Phelps?"

"No ma'am, not so very."

"What did the teacher do to punish you?"

"Nothin'."

"Didn't she scold you?"

"No, but the other teacher allus did."

"I think your teacher is very nice. (Here she slightly prevaricated.)

"Yes ma'am. The other was on Fridays, too. This is the first day—jist the same as Fridays. 'Spect to be licked to-morrer."

"I hope you will be good, Phelps, so she won't have to whip you."

"If she ain't good to me I won't be good to her."

The next day when Phelps came home he made a few more concessions to the teacher. He was half inclined to believe she was all right. The third day he came home quite happy, and with considerable enthusiasm related an incident in which he and the teacher played important parts. On Friday morning he informed his mother that he wanted his breakfast early, as he had an engagement to call at the teacher's house and help carry some flowers to school.

On Saturday Phelps' papa met Marie Anderson on the street and inquired about Phelps' progress in school. She reflected for a moment, as if in doubt whether she ought to express herself freely, and then replied:

"Well, I will tell you frankly about Phelps. Somebody has not understood him, and he has been greatly abused. I may have done you an injustice in my thoughts, for from the first day I saw that he lacked confidence in me. Each day I studied his habits, and could see that he was always expecting

me to wage war against him. He seemed to want me to, and would do things to provoke trouble between us. I wondered if it were because you had not understood him, and had punished him unwisely, or whether perhaps you or your wife—pardon me, I don't mean any offense—might have ever said anything in his presence that would lessen his confidence in me. Many times in my experience I have had to overcome prejudice of parents before I could get the confidence of the pupils, and I assure you that it has been very hard sometimes. But in Phelps' case he and I are now on a peace footing, and everything seems to be perfectly satisfactory. I anticipate no trouble at all."

Phelps' papa thanked her heartily for the interest she had taken in his son, and assured her that she had his entire confidence, and that Phelps' trouble began with his first school experience the year before, and not at home. The other insinuation that perhaps something had been said at home to lessen the child's confidence in the teacher, Phelps' papa let pass without comment. He had heard his wife make such comments, but he did not know whether Phelps heard them.

The next week passed without a ripple of excitement in Phelps' home. He went to school without being driven, and his mamma began to feel thankful. The first outward expression of affection Phelps showed for his new teacher was during his third week at school. His mamma was to have company for dinner one day, and had ordered a

bouquet of roses for the table. Phelps looked at them longingly in silence for some time. This, being a rather unusual thing for him to do, attracted his mamma's attention.

"What is it, Phelps?" she asked.

He hung his head and seemed embarrassed; so to help him out, his mamma continued:

"Those are beautiful roses, aren't they, Phelps?"

"Yes ma'am. I wish I had 'em."

"What for, Phelps? You can enjoy them with all of us just the same as if they were yours."

"Don't care for 'em myself. Like to take 'em to the teacher. Other children take her things."

That day Phelps' mamma had no roses on her table for dinner. Her heart was so full of joy over Phelp's desire to do something for the teacher that she gave him the whole bunch, and dropped a tear among their beautiful petals. The recollection of his bitterness toward his teacher the year before, and all the sorrow it had caused her, made this first sign of affection an important matter.

When Phelps gave his teacher the roses, she buried her handsome face among the buds and blossoms, and drank in their sweet perfume with delight. Then she kissed him with such warmth of affection that his little face glowed with the pleasure of it. All that day at school Phelps could see her fresh, sweet face smiling through creamy roses at him, and his heart filled with love, and a smile of contentment spread over his countenance.

The year passed so quickly away that Phelps'

mamma was surprised at its seemingly short duration. Every week showed great improvement in Phelps' disposition. He became easy to control, and seldom spoke in anger. He never failed to beg some little token, flower or fruit, from his mamma's table to take to his teacher.

Phelps' mamma had only a passing acquaintance with Marie Anderson, and did not meet her during the year up to the last day of school, when she went with Phelps in the afternoon to attend the closing exercises. She felt embarrassed in meeting Miss Anderson because of the fact that she owed her a great debt of gratitude for the manner in which she had reclaimed her boy, and the further fact that she had said some unkind things about her to her friends. As the little boys and girls filed into the room that afternoon, Miss Anderson stood at the door smiling her greeting to them. Not a child failed to turn up his face to get the full glow of her smiling countenance. As they passed they would hand her some little love token—a flower, apple, marble, or anything that was valuable in the eye of the child. When they were all in, Miss Anderson's desk was almost covered with these little signs of love.

That day, when the school closed, Phelps' mamma beheld a scene that surprised her greatly. Every child in the room crowded to the teacher without consent or request to kiss her good-by, and many of them cried at parting, and expressed sincere regret that they were promoted. Such was

the love Marie Anderson received from her pupils. Phelps' mamma, with other mammas, witnessed all this, and most of them, no doubt, remembered some unkind thing they had said about her, and felt correspondingly small and ignoble. As the children filed out the superintendent came in and chatted with the visitors. This gave Miss Anderson a momentary respite, and Phelps' mamma saw her lean her flushed face in her hands and gaze affectionately on the pile of marbles, apples and flowers strewn over her desk, and saw a tear roll slowly down her cheek, and drop among a bunch of violets. She may have been wondering regretfully how it could be possible that, after all the heart she gave to her work, so few people appreciated it—none, perhaps, but these dear, loving children who left her these offerings of love. Perhaps she was remembering some unkind words that had come to her from these very visitors, and was now fullhearted with the knowledge that they had been eye-witnesses to the great love and respect their own children had shown to her.

As the superintendent left the room, Marie Anderson rose from her desk, and as she did so Phelps' mamma approached her and gave her her hand, and as their eyes met they seemed to understand that everything was all right between them. They hesitated for a moment, and then Phelps' mamma took her face between her hands and kissed her affectionately, and then to hide her emotions left the room. Another lady, affected by

the demonstration, also came up and kissed the teacher. Then followed the others, one after another, and when the last was gone Marie Anderson's victory was complete. She buried her face in her hands and wept with joy. It was worth a lifetime of toil—and ten years was nothing—to feel that at last the love that had been scattered broadcast on the waters for so long was now coming in on a friendly tide.

The rumor began to gain ground that Marie Anderson was a great teacher, and the marvel to the people was why they had not known it sooner.

The trouble is we seldom know whom we have among us. People are not always what they seem.





PHELPS IN THE THIRD GRADE

III



IT IS needless to say that Phelps was interested in his studies under the instruction of Marie Anderson while he was in the second grade. That he did well was implied in the fact that Marie Anderson was intelligent and that Phelps loved her. So when the first day of school came around Miss Anderson was greatly surprised to find Phelps back in his old seat, instead of taking his place in Miss Noyes' room. At a glance she took in the situation and her heart filled with pride and affection. She understood instantly the little heart pounding with excitement against a very neat waist that Phelps was wearing that day for the first time. She understood his excitement. And he knew full well that he didn't belong in No. 2, but he reasoned that he might be able to carry the day if he looked innocent and at home. Miss Anderson casually strolled back to his seat and spoke to him.

"Good-morning, Phelps. How are you to-day, my boy?"

"I am all right, thank you."

"Am glad you called to see me, Phelps, before you go to the other room. It was very nice of you."

Phelps' countenance fell at this and he looked as if he would cry.

"I am glad you came to me, first, Phelps, because I want to take you to Miss Noyes and tell her what a dear, good boy you are, so she will know about it at first."

Phelps was a proud-spirited lad and would not show that he was disappointed by saying so in words.

"Come dear," said Miss Anderson, "let us go and see how we like the looks of No. 3. My, it seems wonderful that you are learning so fast, and that you are now ready for No. 3. Why, it's only a short time, it seems, since you came to me."

"Yes, ma'am," said Phelps, a sad little smile playing around his mouth.

Miss Anderson was leading him by the hand, and as they walked down the hall they talked.

"Wish I could allus go to your room, Miss Anderson," said Phelps, helplessly, as she was opening the door to No. 3. She stooped and kissed him.

"It's all right, Phelps. I will see you every day, and it will be almost as if you were going to school to me; don't you know it will, dear?"

"Yes ma'am," and his little fingers clung to hers tighter than ever.

"Miss Noyes," said Miss Anderson, "here is one of my nicest little boys I am going to loan to you for a while. He is so far advanced I can't teach him any more now, so you will have to help me."

"All right, Miss Anderson, we can do that all right. Can't we, son? What's his name—oh yes, Phelps. Yes, that's a good name, son. Come right along now, Phelps, and let me seat you. Bless my heart! Where will I put you? Now really! Well let me see. Here, Phelps, we will put you here, son. There you are now—snug as a kitten."

All this was rattled off in a loud, coarse, good natured voice, apparently running on just to keep up a noise.

At this period a lady appeared in the doorway with a little boy.

"Ah, Mrs. Brown! Do come in. You have brought your dear son with you, haven't you? That's good. I am delighted to have him. Such a sweet child, too. Sit right down, Mrs. Brown, and I will seat your son. Come—oh yes—Charley. Come Charles, and I will let you take this seat."

As Mrs. Brown reflected over the situation she thought "how much nicer is Miss Noyes than that stuck-up Marie Anderson."

In the meantime Marie Anderson was quietly going among her little people, getting them in order and named. Her face seemed to draw each little

pair of eyes to her just as if they were so many plants turning their leaves to the sun.

The parallel is, indeed, correct, for she gave to each child that which made him happy and contented and in a receptive mood. When the day closed Marie Anderson always felt that her energy was all gone. She had poured out so much heart—given off so much of that magnetic force that plays on nerves and invisible chords, that a long, solid sleep was necessary for recuperation.

When Miss Noyes' day's work was ended her jaws and legs only were always tired. She talked so incessantly and so loudly that the teachers in all parts of the building could hear her behind closed doors. Now and then the superintendent would call on her, and would quietly slip into the room. He would begin in an undertone to talk to her. She would answer back so loudly he would always start, though he knew her failing along this line.

When a class would assemble for recitation she was in her glory. She delighted to tramp up and down in front of them and talk. The patrons, as a rule, thought she was a wonderful teacher, because of her ability to use an endless stream of words. She belonged to the Woman's Club and had been its secretary. She also belonged to the Rebekah Order of Odd Fellows, The Tribe of Ben Hur and several other organizations. In fact, she joined everything in sight, and always used every opportunity to make a speech. She could tell a fairly good story, and make an average talk at any ordi-

nary gathering. She was always put on the program for all teachers' meetings, because she was ready to respond, and there were so few who would.

Thus it went abroad that Miss Noyes was a great teacher.

She gave nothing of her heart to her school, nor did the school give any of its heart to her. The first few days of each year the children would flock to her desk hunting for affection and love, and Miss Noyes would make quite a demonstration, but somehow it wouldn't last. In a very short time the children ceased to come to her. They felt what they could not see.

But few people ever saw Miss Noyes angry. No matter what happened, she was always proud of herself. It may be she never saw the little things that worried other teachers, on account of having her attention centered in herself. Her school was very noisy, but by some means or other she managed to get the pupils over the work called for in the course of study, and passed a rowdy, mischievous crowd on to the fourth grade.

One day not long after school began, Mrs. Brown met Phelps' mamma on the street and exclaimed:

"Oh, aren't you glad we have such a lovely teacher this year for our children? I took Charles to school the first day and found Miss Noyes such a generous character. She made me feel at home—such an improvement over that stuck-up Marie Anderson."

"Do you think so?" replied Phelps' mamma. "I liked Miss Anderson very much. I only hope Miss Noyes will do as well with Phelps. He is not an easy lad to make war with."

"Oh, Miss Noyes is so jolly—she will get along with them."

A few days after this Phelps' mamma visited the school. She was greeted at the door by Miss Noyes—her towsled hair standing out as the most conspicuous feature of her person. In fact, she presented quite a formidable appearance, though at a second glance it was quite apparent that she was simply ignorant and harmless.

"Why, this is Phelps' mamma, isn't it? Do come right in now. Oh, Phelps is such a DEAR! Sit down in my chair. I am so glad you have called on me. It does me so much good."

Every teacher in the building knew Miss Noyes had a caller. They all had good hearing.

Phelps' mamma sat watching the movements of the teacher. They were interesting indeed. She stalked up and down the aisles like a mock queen on parade. Only she was serious about it.

"What is it, Johnny?" as a finger snapped in the rear of the room.

"S-o-u-n-d-i-n-g," the boy spelled out, laboriously.

"That spells *sounding*, Johnny. It means to make a noise."

"Well, James, what is it?"

"Where's the readin' lesson?"

"I told you to take the next lesson, James. You must not forget. Now get to work."

"All ready now, A class for reading. One!—two!—three!" and they tramped to class like a lot of cattle breaking into a cornfield, each crowding for the best positions. Then as they crowded in line they swayed back and forth, looking at their toes, trying to get lined up straight.

"All ready now. Begin!" exclaimed Miss Noyes, dramatically.

"Page 72, Lesson XIV, Don't Kill the Birds." Thus the boy at the head of the class began and in a sing-song manner he read the first verse of the poem.

"Next," exclaimed the teacher, and so on through the lesson. Then they spelled the words.

"Class is dismissed," and they broke ranks and fled to their seats.

Miss Noyes enjoyed the bustle and confusion. She liked to hear the tramp of feet, the beating of drums, and similar things.

As said before, she seldom grew angry, but now and then she would get out of patience and speak up sharply, and at such times she was most unlovable. So it came about in the course of the first fall months of school that she was destined to open up an old wound and bring on trouble for all concerned. Phelps had gone along smoothly enough, though it was apparent to his mamma that he did not love his teacher. He had often tried to but had never found any response. Of course Phelps did

not know what the trouble was, nor did he bother his mind with it. But one day he found a combination in his number work on which he thought he needed help, so he went to Miss Noyes and asked her to show him how to do it. Miss Noyes at that moment was thinking out a speech she wanted to make that very night at the lodge meeting of the "Lady Highlanders," and had arrived at a very critical point when Phelps ran in his sordid questions about numbers. It was a provoking matter in the extreme. So in a sharp tone she said,

"Why you can do that—you understand that!"

"No ma'am, I don't."

"You do too, I tell you. You can do that if you want to."

"I can't do it, either, if I want to," retorted Phelps, now thoroughly angered.

"Phelps," she exclaimed loudly, "aren't you ashamed of yourself, sir? Go right to your seat at once."

Now a strange fatality happened—one of those happenings that often result from short-sightedness or lack of observation.

Phelps' first teacher, ignorant and selfish as she was, had learned early in Phelps' career that he had a nervous affection which, when angered, caused the muscles of his face to twitch in a very conspicuous manner.

Marie Anderson knew of it within an hour after she saw him the first time. But Miss Noyes, always absorbed in herself, never saw it until this

eventful day. It was not very noticeable except when he was angered. So this day when Miss Noyes ordered him to his seat in such harsh terms, he was so aroused that his face drew into all sorts of contortions, so that even Miss Noyes could not fail to see it. Every child in school knew of his affliction and was so used to it they paid no attention to ordinary expressions.

When Miss Noyes saw it she immediately arrived at the conclusion that he was "making faces" at her, so she jumped up, jerked him out of his seat, and without further questioning, took him into the cloak-room and whipped him. The first impression the principal had of the trouble was a terrible thought that a horse had fallen into the basement and was struggling up the stairs. Later, however, she was appealed to for sympathy, as Phelps had tried to defend himself with teeth and nails, leaving several painful marks on Miss Noyes' hands.

That night Phelps couldn't eat any supper, but he said nothing about his trouble at school. When he went to bed his mamma forgot about his unusual appearance at supper, amid other family cares, until her own bedtime arrived. Then, as was her custom, she went into his bedroom to tuck him in nicely for the night and to kiss him. She found him wide-awake with the cover all tossed about.

"What is it, dear?" she said softly and soothingly as she sat on the bed and drew him up to her. "Why are you not asleep?"

The tender, loving sympathy that only a mother

can give opened up his little heart to her, and between his sobs he told how he had been whipped, and how he fought, bit and scratched the teacher.

"But what did you do, Phelps? Tell your mamma everything. What did you do to make her whip you?"

"Oh, I don't know, mamma; I only asked her to help me with my numbers. She got cross about it, and it made me cross, and after I got to my seat she came and jerked me out and dragged me into the cloak-room and began beating me. Oh, I could kill her! I just hate her!" and he fairly trembled with anger at the outrage.

His mamma, almost heart-broken over it, managed to get everything from him that had passed between them, and yet she was greatly at loss to know what he could have done, besides, that warranted such an attack.

The next morning Phelps' mamma called on Miss Noyes at her boarding house, and without loss of time proceeded to the point.

"Miss Noyes, you have done a very unwise thing in whipping my boy, no matter what may be the reason you have for it. He is not to be controlled that way. But I came especially to know why you whipped him. I can't find anything from his account of it to warrant your act?"

"You can't," shouted Miss Noyes in her natural and saue tone. "He didn't tell you then that he made horrible faces at me?"

Phelps' mamma sank back in her chair as the

thought dawned on her, and just gazed at Miss Noyes, and marvelled at her lack of sense and observation.

"My God!" she exclaimed at length, in agony. "Can it be possible that you have had that boy two months under your eye and have failed to see that he is afflicted with a nervous twitching of the muscles of his face? Can it be possible, Miss Noyes, that you have been so blind and so cruel to him? How can you ever see him again without your face burning with the shame of it?"

"A nervous affliction? What do you mean?" shouted Miss Noyes again.

"Just what I said. When you angered him with your talk about the problem, it provoked his affliction and made the muscles of his face draw it all out of shape."

Miss Noyes was nonplussed. She was not at heart brutal. She was only selfish and ignorant. It hurt her pride to meet that refined, deep-feeling woman and have her prove to her face that she had outraged a child without cause, simply because she was not able to see and understand a thing that every child in school understood.

"Can it be possible?" she said at last in a broken tone of voice.

"I am *so* sorry, Miss Noyes. If you only knew what a time of sorrow and trouble I had the first year he was in school, you could appreciate my state of mind. He cannot be managed by brute force. He only responds to love and justice. Last

year he never caused me a moment's trouble. He loved Marie Anderson, and as a result he grew gentle and sweet-tempered under her teaching. I would almost as soon see him dead and buried as to have him develop as he did the first year—into an ill-tempered, revengeful boy. If you could only win him back to you, Miss Noyes! if you could only love him and keep him growing better, I could willingly sacrifice my life to you—anything—everything—that he may grow to be a real man—not a *thing*, deformed and detested. If you only could, Miss Noyes! Can't you? Can't you? Won't you try to do it?"

There was something so noble, yet so pathetic, in her pleading that Miss Noyes, bowed down with shame and regret, burst into tears, and said,

"I will, oh I will! I will do my best. I have done a terrible thing. I promise you to win back his respect and love!"

That morning Miss Noyes stood behind her desk subdued and silent, with sad eyes. The pupils filed into their places with comparative silence. Such a scene had never been known before in her room. There was something strange and breathing of expectancy in the air. Each little face was turned to her in wonderment. What could it all mean?

Finally when all were settled quietly in their places, she began to speak gently in a trembling voice.

"Children, I did a terrible thing yesterday. Phelps asked me for help—I was cross with him.

I punished him because I thought he made faces at me. I have since found I was wrong, that he didn't do it. I hope Phelps will—will forgive—forgive me."

She sat down and buried her face in her hands. Several girls cried out of sympathy. The whole school was saddened and chastened by this noble example. At recess many little arms incidentally found their way around Miss Noyes' neck and waist. She was surprised that there was a response in the whole school, and the children seemed to love her better because of the sacrifice of false pride she had made in her public acknowledgment of a wrong done in public.

Phelps showed that he had forgiven her by his actions, but it was several days before he ever approached her on intimate terms, but when he did—Oh, the glory of that day—Miss Noyes rejoiced as she never had before. She had at last won back his respect, and her influence over him was for the good. She had paid back in part the debt she had owed him and his mother, and the paying was *such* a pleasure! Long before she even thought she had wiped out the account, she had formed new ideas on the subject of teaching, and the old ones had gradually slipped away from her, and seemed dead things.

She now studied each child individually, and as a result of it her work became effective, and she found so many things to love. She forgot to attend several lodge meetings and other public affairs on

which she was accustomed to spend so much time and energy.

Thus she grew nearer to the truth—nearer to the ideal. A great blunder had broken her false pride—opened her eyes, and softened her life.

It sometimes requires a great sorrow—a sharp blow—a deep thrust—a cutting remark—or something terrible to happen to us, before we can muster strength sufficient to break away from bad habits or methods.

Phelps' mamma had opened a door into a beautiful chamber in Miss Noyes' heart, and after that the little children could easily find their way into it, where love and sympathy were always to be found. It was like a stream that had its source up among the crags and peaks, and babbled along among scenes cold and drear, over a tableland, and on down into a desert to the west of the mountain where it was drunk up by the hungry sands. It had run along this way for countless ages, as its dried-up bed attests, until one day a great landslide occurred on the tableland and blocked up the gorge through which the stream flowed, and it turned its course to the east. It made a new bed for itself, and this way lay down green slopes where large pine trees whispered to it, and where mountain flowers sprang up by its side and nodded in the wind; on down through the little meadows where the wild grass and willows grew in profusion along its banks—where the birds would come and take their baths in its crystal waters,

and wild animals would quench their thirst. Thus it babbled on through a country full of delight and love and life to be swallowed up by the sea, where it still sparkled and danced and was kissed by the sun.





PHELPS IN THE FOURTH GRADE IV



BEFORE Phelps left the third grade—probably two months or more, as near as her superintendent could remember it—Miss Noyes, his teacher, scored a great success. It is worthy of note here, because it shows us that in the most hopeless looking cases there is a possibility of reformation.

Miss Noyes belonged to a familiar type of teachers that may be found in most any small city of from a thousand to five or ten thousand people. They hold their places in the schools not by their skill as teachers, but by their skill in making people believe they are teachers. They are clever politicians, and that necessarily means a lack of sincerity.

In Miss Noyes' case there had been two or three efforts in the last fifteen years of her work in the schools to drop her from the pay-roll. These movements were always begun by new superintendents

in the office who were unacquainted with the situation, and all had ended disastrously. They, each in their turn, dropped the matter as gracefully as possible as soon as they found most of the leading men, both on and off the board, were bitterly opposed to the proposition. There were always two or three intimate friends of hers on the board who boldly defended her at every step.

This was the state of affairs when Miss Noyes had her great trouble with Phelps. Her superintendent at that time, having come into office at the first of the year, had been feeling his way to have the board dismiss her at the end of the term. Toward that end he had interviewed two or three members of the board on the subject. The news was carried to Miss Noyes by her secret agents that very night, but, strange to say, she remained silent and thoughtful. On similar occasions in the past she issued her orders to her agents (her friends) and a neat little by-play that no one ever saw or understood who was not into the secret of the movement, would take place, and as a result the superintendent would find himself perfectly helpless to rid himself and the schools of her service. This usually sufficed to keep him still for as long a time as he could hold his position as superintendent. But on the night this harsh bit of news reached her she was still subdued and saddened by her experience with Phelps. In fact, she had tried hard for a whole month to appreciate the children—understand their thoughts—feel with

them all that passed. She had done her level best to be honest—poured out her soul to them, and though she often failed to do the right thing, the children did not seem to mind it, because they felt that she was sincere. So when her informant and old friend gave her the news of the superintendent's effort to have her removed, she simply gazed out of the window, where the frogs were croaking and the soft springtime breezes played among the bursting buds.

Her face was sad, and most any other type of woman would have cried out of pity for herself, but Miss Noyes did not show her grief that way. She was a strong woman and determined enough, as everybody knew who ever crossed her path, yet she was clever only to those unsophisticated people who are not able to read an ordinary character.

So as she stood there her friend looked at her in surprise.

"What?" she said. "Aren't you going to do anything to counteract his efforts?"

"No, my dear, I am going to quit that sort of campaigning. It is a new thought to me, but lately it has been borne in on my mind that no true teacher should have to scheme and fight in order to hold her place in the schools. I have begun to see all this very clearly, and as I see it I am seized with a great desire to master the situation along the true lines of advancement. I am going to convince the superintendent that I am worthy of my

place before these two months close, or I shall not apply for my position next year."

The next day after school closed she walked into the superintendent's office and greeted him cordially. He was plainly nervous—the feeling that he had been trying to get her removed without her knowledge of it made him just a little ashamed of himself; however, he was soon relieved to find that she showed no knowledge of this, but was deeply interested in certain work she was planning in her room, and on which she wanted his advice. She was so sincere about it, he began to wonder. He had never noticed her display such an interest before. He noticed for the first time certain lines in her face that showed a new thought, a new aim had come into her heart.

The result of her visit was to bring the superintendent to her room the next day to help her with the work she had planned. He had not been there for three weeks—purposely avoided her. To-day he sat down and gave his attention to what he saw there before him. It was bad enough, in a way, from his point of view, because he was a man who believed everything should be done by rule and on time. He was a great disciplinarian. The pupils must march in perfect time—sit in perfect form in a certain given attitude, etc. So Miss Noyes' school was an eyesore from that point of view. Pupils were sprawled about in most any form, but being a man of discernment, he saw that the school had forgotten his presence in a few minutes in its

absorption in the work before it. He saw that Miss Noyes stood quietly behind her desk, and walked as quietly as she could among her pupils. Her face was lit up with interest and anxiety. Once in a while she would get noisy, out of force of habit, but it was apparent that the grand stand play had had its day, and was being relegated to the rear. She could not work by rule nor make a machine out of her school, but she could interest the pupils. This was all clearly apparent. He looked at the work the pupils were doing, and found it was good—as good as any. She was getting results. She scanned every face, and seemed to make a mental effort to see the thought back of it. Her whole force of mind and body, and she had much of both, was now thrown into her work. Heretofore she had used this force playing to the grand stand, and depended on popular opinion to keep her in her place. She had learned by the Phelps affair that this habit was a dangerous one, and led over many reefs. From day to day, since the scene with Phelps' mamma, she had poured out her soul to the school, and a blind man could have detected that a great change had come over it. It had become softened, sweetened and happier.

As the superintendent sat there he began to experience a change in his feelings. At first he had to overcome his prejudice, but when that was done he quickly got into sympathy with the sincere, though not perfect, work of the teacher. He began to feel the spirit that pervaded the room, and

realize that he had done her a great injustice; so much did he feel it that he was anxious to get out so he could go to those members of the board he had spoken to and tell them he was wrong in his estimate of her. He went up to Miss Noyes and excused himself—he must go. She looked frankly and inquiringly into his face, and he seemed to understand. He took her hand hurriedly at the door and said, with feeling:

“I have done you a great injustice, Miss Noyes. Your work is *very* good—much better than I could even have hoped for yesterday. I didn’t know—I didn’t understand you as I do now.”

And he hadn’t either. As he hurried away, innocent of the cause of all the change that had come over Miss Noyes, and ignorant of the fact that she knew the steps he had taken to have her removed, she turned to the window and gazed wistfully after him and said to herself:

“No, you don’t understand, but you are beginning to—you are beginning to see what I feel. Thank God for it!”

She went on with her work feeling jubilant over the prospect of holding her position for the first time in her life on real merit. It’s a great, joyful feeling to one who experiences it for the first time in a life somewhat stormy and eventful.

The two months closed with satisfaction to all. Miss Noyes took to No. 4 that year the most orderly and enthusiastic class it had ever been her good fortune to pass up. She went up with them

the first day of school and they filed into the room together, she as proud of them as one could well be.

Miss Jane Adams, who taught the fourth grade, greeted them cordially, and Miss Noyes introduced her to the school. Miss Adams was a sweet-tempered lady, whose life was regulated by rule. She was as exact as a clock. It had been impressed upon her for years by a long line of superintendents that a military discipline was essential. Within a month from the day Miss Adams received the pupils from No. 3, she had them marking time and moving in unison to such perfection, it was a marvel to all those who saw them. Few realized that most of the thought and energy of the child was used up keeping time and place with the class. Looking down the aisle you could see a line of heads, a line of elbows, a line of toes, a line of hands. In fact, the school was always in line. If you looked more closely you would see now and then a boy or girl relax for a moment from the attitude of attention, to be hauled up into place again by the eye of the teacher. Miss Adams was saturated with all this sort of thing, but through it all she was sweet and patient. She was a lovable woman, and could get anything she asked for from her pupils. This awful disciplining may have done good, but it cannot be denied that it also did much harm.

The order of dismissal was a model of discipline, and Miss Adams' pupils surpassed all others. She stood at the foot of the stairs to mark time for them

as they came down the steps and passed down and out on to the front walk. It was a source of great pride to her. She always felt in her innermost conscience that her school excelled all others in its manner of entrance and exit. But far be it from her to even hint such a thing to the other teachers.

One day as Phelps was coming out with the line he thought he had another step to take on the stairs, when in fact he was down. This made him stumble out of line, much to Miss Adams' humiliation. So great was her annoyance it was not certain that she had not lost control of her temper. Phelps righted himself and went on without any knowledge of Miss Adams' annoyance. He had been too long in Miss Noyes' room and not long enough in Miss Adams' room to feel the far-reaching importance of marking time in a proper manner.

But Phelps loved Miss Adams *very* much. Every look and action indicated that. The years he had been in school had given him an opportunity to see her daily at the foot of the stairs, and he had formed his opinion of her long before he was promoted. He never failed to look to her for her smile every time he passed the year he was in No. 3. If she didn't see him in the line he managed to dodge around outside until he caught her eye, then romped off home happy. There were others, too, that hungered for Miss Adams' smiles.

A few days after Phelps stumbled on the stairs he did a most extraordinary and scandalous thing. He had passed without his customary good-night

smile, because Miss Adams was busy talking to some one else. He and another little boy ran on an errand for his mamma which took him across the street. In passing back he saw the last of the line from the upper grades coming out, and Miss Adams still stood talking with her friend. Phelps thought to get his good-night smile and greeting, so he and his companion went romping down the walk to the door, and thundered into the vestibule. He poked his head in the door and called out: "Good-night, Miss Adams," and seeing her disapproving countenance he dodged back and they ran away.

Miss Adams was angry, unbecoming to her as it was. She was disgraced in the eyes of her friend. Think of such a scandalous act as romping like cattle into the hall! Can't you see how humiliated a precise woman of her type would be under such circumstances? Seriously, it proved to be a sad case, for Miss Adams indignantly, yet *very* politely, sent a formal note to the principal asking that the boy should be whipped. It was the rule *that* year that before a child could be whipped the principal must first give permission. So when the demand was made, permission was promptly granted, but on second thought the principal remembered that Phelps' mamma had notified her that when Phelps needed serious correction her attention should first be called to it.

Miss Jane Adams was no coward. Her convictions were deep and strong, and when she felt a thing was right she went straight ahead. She was

a brave, noble woman, but in this particular case it will be seen she had erred in judgment.

She went straight as she could go to see Phelps' parents, and it so happened that it was papa instead of mamma she met. She came to the subject at once—laid the matter before Mr. Graham, telling him how hard she had struggled to get the children to walk well and keep in order, and each time it seemed that Phelps would do something to mar the beauty and order of the line. It was simply *ter-ri-ble*. "I have been notified," she went on, "that in order to punish Phelps I must come and get your permission. I feel that he must be whipped."

Visions of the war between Phelps and his first teacher came before Mr. Graham's mind's eye at this statement, and he grew almost angry with gentle Miss Adams.

"I suppose," he replied, "that a child's mind is of no importance, and that lining up and making a pretty display is everything. I want you to know, Miss Adams, that I believe in order, time and place for everything. I want my boy to do the best he can to produce those conditions, but it does not occur to me now that you ought to overshadow the object of the public schools by attaching so much importance to how a child walks or sits—so much so that you make him uncomfortable, thus detracting from his mental effort. I suppose, of course, the reason for your adopting such a strenuous

method is that you assume the boy did what he did maliciously, to annoy you?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Graham, I do not think he did it maliciously, but he is so careless—he won't think or try to be careful, and I just must have him understand that he *must* think before he acts, and then act carefully."

Poor Miss Adams had not once thought of the possibility that she was not thinking very deeply on all sides of this important subject. She could see the carelessness of the child, and to her precise mind there was absolutely no excuse for it.

"You may be right," replied Mr. Graham, "in your position on this subject, Miss Adams, but now tell me what will be the result of your whipping him should I give you permission? What will he think about it? How will he feel toward you? Will it make him love you more, or will it make him hate you? What do you know about the boy's temperament? Is he revengeful, obstinate, vindictive and easily aroused, or is he humble, timid and likely to be frightened with the whip? Do you think he would cry out with pain when you begin to beat him, or would he stand with clenched teeth cursing you in his heart? Do you think the club is a good educator? Are you not a member of the Humane society, and have you not helped to prosecute the brutes on the streets for beating other brutes over whom they had control? Was it not revolting to your refined sense to see these cruelties practiced on helpless creatures? Do you think you

have control over the very life and nature of the child? Do you feel that you own it—that you may beat it whenever its own nature leads it to conflict with your man-made ideas of decorum? Do you want to whip a child because he stumbles physically when *we*, men and women, stumble in our thoughts and judgment of things every day? Do _____”

“Oh, Mr. Graham, do have mercy on me! You horrify me with your presentation. I thought the boy ought to be punished. Please examine him and see what defense he can make for such actions.”

Miss Adams sat there trembling with excitement and fear lest she had made a mistake. Her sensitive nature was horrified with the thought that she might be as cruel and heartless as the men on the street she had seen beat their horses.

Phelps did not know Miss Adams was there, so his father called him into another room, in order that Miss Adams could hear all that passed between them.

“Well, Phelps, my boy, how did you get along at school to-day?”

“Fine, papa! I tell you we have *the teacher* all right. You know, papa, Miss Adams is just as good as she can be. I allus think she is most as good as mamma is, and may be she will kiss me some day like mamma does when she knows me as Miss Anderson does. Miss Anderson allus did. But you know, I think I must have hurt her feel-

ings to-night, 'cause when I run into the hall to tell her good-bye—I didn't get her to see me as I passed out in the line—she looked at me and didn't smile. Guess she may have been thinking of something else. Teachers can't allus be thinkin' of boys, can they papa?"

"That's a fact, Phelps," assented his papa. "They have much to trouble them, and you must always do your best to keep time and not stumble or make a noise in the house. I imagine Miss Adams likes boys best who are quiet and orderly."

"Yes, papa, I am sure she does, and I am goin' to try to be ever so quiet. But you know I jist get so I want to break and run and jump and holler. Sometimes I jist feel like I will bust tryin' to keep still. It's awful hard, papa, to sit up straight and look straight, and do jist right. You know, papa, I wish we could do at school like you do at your office. When I see you settin' there with your feet on the desk, smokin', on Saturdays, it jist makes me wish school was like that. Say, papa, let's you and me play school some day like that. Wouldn't it be fun, though?"

"I fear we wouldn't learn much, Phelps, without a teacher. We would get to telling stories and laughing away our time."

"Oh, but wouldn't it be fun, though? I'll tell you, papa, we could get Miss Adams to come down, may be, and she'd be a lovely teacher. Then she'd help us tell stories, too. She tells us

the nicest stories about boys. Don't you wish she would come, papa?"

"Yes; I think we would have a pleasant time together. But I have some work to do now, Phelps, so you may run out and play."

"I'd rather talk with you, papa, if you wasn't goin' to be busy."

"We will talk later, son, when I am through with my work. Run along now"—and Miss Adams heard the boy kiss his papa and romp out at the back door—heard him laughing and talking with his mamma in the back-yard—and her heart was beating fast. A red spot shone on each cheek, and she felt as if she had been dragged back from a precipice, over which she would have fallen in another instant. A curtain had been drawn aside, and she had looked on a beautiful scene of home life. She had seen a big, strong, bearded man, who smoked strong cigars and practiced law in a dirty courtroom—had learned that he sat with his feet elevated on his desk, and had no particular manners so far as she could see; yet she had seen this boy pour out his innermost thoughts to him, just as if he were never in his life rebuked—just as if he expected sympathy for his plans and desires—just as if his papa were his playmate. And she heard him sing her praises—had even heard him hope that she would one day love him enough to kiss him as his mamma did.

So this was the boy she had come for permission to beat, to brutalize! She felt it all—the keenness

of her senses, the beauty of her life and thought—her love for everything that was good and refined—all conspired to make her wretched, wretched beyond the conception of ordinary mortals. She was almost speechless when Mr. Graham came back to her. She tried to speak, but broke off with: "Can I ever—ever—forgive myself for such carelessness?" She grasped the hand he offered her in parting, and hurried from the room.

"Oh, what must he think of me?" she gasped, as she hurried along. "Why did I not think; why was I so wrapped up in such little contemptible things as how a child walks or sits? They seem so small to me now. Oh, to think if I had whipped him, poor little fellow, loving me so, and hungering for me to kiss him. Oh, God!" she cried in agony of spirit, "give me light that I may see!" The buildings had become dim shadows, and the sidewalk a blurred line, as she hurried on in the coming night with a heart heavy as stone.

But later a light appeared, and it came from an invisible source down deep in her soul, where it was not disturbed by passing breezes, and her heart cry, "Give me light that I may see," had been answered.



PHELPS IN THE FIFTH GRADE

V



MISS Adeline Yerkes began teaching in the fifth grade the next fall after Phelps finished his work in the fourth grade. Her father was a strong politician and a man of considerable prominence in the town. Miss Yerkes pos-

sessed many of her father's good qualities, and just as many of his bad ones. Phelps had never seen her until that first day when he and his foster sister, Ellen, saw her standing in the door smiling a welcome to them. She was tall, dark and good-looking. In her face was much warmth of feeling, and her mouth indicated considerable strength of character; but to the discerning it was apparent that her mouth had long since become accustomed to an expression of anger at intervals far too frequent.

But this first morning as she stood smiling to the children, the casual observer would have failed to find a single line of her face not suited to a beauti-

ful character. Who is it that does not feel kindly toward a bright, handsome woman when she is at her best, full of gladness and welcome—beaming with enthusiasm? No one, I should say, and the pity is that teachers are not always thus.

So Miss Yerkes made a splendid showing for herself that day. Many parents were informed that night by their children that a lovely teacher presided over the fifth grade. For the first few days the girls crowded around her looking at her new gown, and taking a complete inventory of her apparel. The boys cast many a kindly and admiring look at her. It did seem as if they were going to love her *en masse*, and perhaps they might have succeeded in doing so if they had not been so very human, and called down upon their heads a retribution for their faults. Each day Miss Yerkes found that her troubles were increasing. She was young and not used to the whims of the children. They annoyed her with questions and poor lessons. As long as the work was new and the faults of her pupils unknown to her she could smile. But day by day she learned that *this* boy would lie—that one would steal, *another* would swear. The girls would tattle, and quarrel, and do no end of annoying things. All these things she noted with contempt, and a sneer would take the place of her smile. The good qualities in the children were lost to her. The children she liked—the good children from good homes, especially those who had good lessons—she always smiled to, and they loved her.

As the days went by she contracted the habit of scolding and looking ugly. At times her eyes would flash with pent-up anger, and she would bite her lips to keep from doing her worst.

It was probably two weeks before she finally broke over all restraint and tongue-lashed a class of pupils of which Phelps was a member. One little sensitive girl in the class cried. Phelps had another attack of nervousness, and his face twitched itself out of shape. She had gone over a certain lesson with them several times and they couldn't get it. She had abused them roundly for their lack of interest and attention. She laid down the proposition to them again, slowly and distinctly. Then she ordered Phelps to recite it. There he sat, gazing moodily out of the window, his face still twitching from excitement. After all her pains to make the matter clear she found this boy not even listening to her. Her anger was renewed, and this time she reinforced it by taking Phelps by the arm and jerking him out of his seat. She shook him good and knocked him against the wall, his head striking the door casing with considerable force. The children were so unnerved by this outrageous performance that few, if any, were able to apply themselves to their task. Her uncontrollable passion frightened all the pupils, and her red and repulsive face shocked many of the more sensitive. This incident may seem to many rather unnatural—that a teacher would be a fool to do such a thing for such a small cause. But it is nevertheless lit-

erally true, and every day, everywhere, teachers lose control of themselves and show anger in the presence of their pupils over trifling matters. It is too common and too true for any one acquainted with the profession to dispute.

The injustice of Phelps' punishment was apparent to every child in the school, and to Phelps it was very little short of murder. Sensitive in the extreme, he suffered as few can realize with the shame and disgrace of it. Miss Yerkes lost a great deal that day, and so did the children.

The next few days Miss Yerkes smiled and smiled, but it did not quite cover up her outrageous act. The memory of it lingered with the children for a week, and before it was fairly gone there was another outbreak—not so bad as the first, but bad enough. When angry she was repulsive-looking, and a sneer would take the place of a sweet expression that hovered around her mouth when she was in good humor. If we could but know how repulsive and hideous anger is we would always go away and hide from the face of man when we feel it coming on.

Phelps was now quite a boy, and he had been batted about sufficiently to make him somewhat independent. He was at the point where boys cease to confide all their troubles to their mammas. So he did not tell his story when he went home that night, and in order to make sure his mamma wouldn't get it he pledged his sister, Ellen, who was just his age and in his class at school, not to

tell. Ellen was a sympathetic little girl, and she somewhat took the place of his mamma.

As they went home that day Ellen came softly up to his side and walked with him in silence. By and by she got hold of his hand and swung it back and forth, and with much ado about nothing tried to get him to laugh. But he smiled not at all and they went on, lapsing again into silence.

"Did it hurt you, Phelps?" she asked at length, tenderly.

"Yes," he mumbled, and the tears welled up and trickled down his face.

"Does it hurt you yet, Phelps?"

He nodded his head without speaking.

"Where does it hurt you?"

"In here," pointing to his breast.

It was his pride, his manhood, that was hurt, but he didn't know, nor did she, what it was. Perhaps they thought the shaking he got had broken something in his breast—a bone may be. It is not supposed that they should know that it was his heart that was hurt.

The point of interest is, however, the result of it all. From that day on Phelps gradually grew furtive and sly. The teacher noticed this and began to bear down on him harder in a senseless effort to crush him—conquer his spirit—make a menial—a slave—of him. Not that she meant to do all this—her only aim was order. If they would only keep still and recite well she cared for nothing more. She did not understand childlife, nor had she ever

been told that her method would cultivate an evil disposition in the child.

It got to such a point before the year closed that it was apparent that Phelps could not be promoted unless he greatly improved in his work. No one seemed to know why this state of affairs should exist, as Phelps had always been considered a bright boy. But it all came out when Phelps' mamma got a note from the teacher, Miss Yerkes, informing her that Phelps would have to do special work at home or he would not be promoted. She took the matter up with Phelps that night, and arranged for him to bring home his books the next afternoon so she could help him.

When she began the lesson with him the next day, she discovered that he seemed to be confused and nervous. When she would ask him a question he seemed not to be thinking for an answer to it, but would sit expecting to be scolded for not being able to answer it. In short, he sat like some poor, dumb, helpless thing dodging the blows from a near-by enemy.

His mamma gathered from all these symptoms that in the beginning the teacher had asked him a question he couldn't answer, and showed impatience at his seeming dullness. Later she had asked another, and the boy's mind instantly recalled the former scene, and he would be seized with fear lest he *couldn't* answer, thus destroying his power to concentrate his thought on the subject under discussion. So the matter had drifted on from week

to week, from bad to worse, the teacher growing more impatient every day, and the boy growing so nervous that he ceased to think on the subject under consideration at all. At times, when everything was pleasant, he would be able to think clearly, and would begin to be interested, but should he hesitate for a moment the teacher's face would cloud over and in a flash every shadow of reason would leave the boy's mind and he could not think of anything except that he was to be shamed and abused again because he couldn't think like other boys could.

All this bore heavily on his mind but he had been ashamed to let his mamma know he was stupid. Ellen had helped him at home, but neither had mentioned the trouble to their mamma. To Ellen there was no trouble. She was a happy, hearty girl with nerves of iron. She was always bubbling over with good nature, and never failed to see some humor in everything. Even when the teacher grew red in the face and stormed like a spoiled child, to Ellen the situation was humorous. Nothing the teacher could say ever cut her any. One day she was unfortunate enough to laugh at the teacher when that young lady was all but tearing her hair about some trifling matter. It resulted in her getting both cheeks slapped and hair pulled. This made her angry for the moment but she had almost forgotten it before school closed for the day. There were so many funny things going on she hadn't time to remember it. Even that after-

noon as she and Phelps walked home together, and while Phelps was expressing his anger in strong terms against the teacher for striking her, she burst out, apparently in the most irrelevant laughter.

"Why Ellen," said Phelps in surprise, "what are you laughing at?"

After much effort to suppress her pent-up emotion, she said:

"I was just—just thinkin' how much like fishworms they looked," then she went off into another fit of laughter.

The association of fishworms with a delightful sport made Phelps feel like a new boy; so he caught the inspiration also, and they had quite an attack of it together.

"What looked like fishworms, Ellen, what was it?"

"Didn't you see how red she got, Phelps, and didn't you see them big crooked veins swell up on her forehead? Oh my! but I just about died thinkin' how they looked like fishworms." She had another very severe attack of laughter at this point and Phelps joined her, pounding her on the back to keep her from choking, so he told her. It was in this manner that Ellen took punishment. It would take a world of grief to bear down her buoyant and happy spirit.

But with Phelps it was different. He was of a serious turn of mind. He took everything in earnest—saw little humor in a real funny situation. He was very sensitive. Every offense against his per-

son, no matter how slight, was felt so keenly it bore him down in spirit for a whole day. It was several weeks before the acute stage passed after the time when Miss Yerkes had jerked him out of his seat and knocked him against the wall. He was so humiliated, and hurt by it that it was always on his mind. In the midst of study, solving a problem or reading his lesson over, that terrible scene would come before his eyes and he would forget his work. In the midst of a recitation when the teacher would be explaining a point to the class and as he watched her intently to catch the thought he would be reminded of the scene when her face was ugly with anger and he would feel her hands clutch his arms—feel his head strike the wall—feel the pent-up bitterness of it all come over him overwhelmingly. Then all her explanations would be lost in the flood of his emotions. His poor face would begin to twitch with the old-time nervous affliction, and the other children would look from him to the teacher and back again to him, thus causing the boy more trouble by embarrassing him.

“Phelps, keep your face straight and give attention to this explanation,” the teacher would say shortly. “I am sure you haven’t the least idea of what I have been saying, and I have just wasted my breath on you. Now then, tell me what I said about that.”

Poor Phelps! He had not heard it at all. He would get red in the face and every muscle would twitch in pain—heart pain.

"There now! I told you you couldn't. Go to your seat, sir, and study this lesson till you get it. I am ashamed of you."

So Phelps would go to his seat, wishing he was dead, but wanting to see her dead first; but Miss Yerkes went on with her work, batting at this one and that one, never dreaming how her words and acts were murdering some of them as truly as if she had taken a knife and stabbed them to the heart. She struck out right or left, just as her passing mood suggested, never considering for a moment that every blow should be gauged according to the body it was to strike. Ellen's great, strong, humorous soul could take all her teacher could give and find something in it to laugh at. But Phelps, sensitive beyond ordinary mortals—delicate and considerate, could not stand them at all. He was gradually becoming a dullard and a wreck through the influence of his teacher, and the teacher was too ignorant to know it.

Miss Yerkes was a graduate of a High school and had many accomplishments. She moved in good society, and her father was a prominent man. But no one had ever told her it was brutish to show anger before her pupils. Her father before her often flew into a passion and would make things lively for a time, and *he* was a big man. She would have been surprised and deeply offended had any one ever intimated that her father was a barbarian, notwithstanding his greatness and good qualities. There were barbarians, away back there in the

past, who were great. But real gentlemen and real ladies in this day of refinement and education do not become barbarians because children are not perfect, and because a trifling matter interposes itself where it ought not to. When it becomes proper for teachers to show anger in the presence of their pupils, then it will be proper for gentlemen to quarrel and fight like the beasts of the field.





PHELPS IN THE SIXTH GRADE

VI



MISS WHITE, who presided over the destinies of the pupils of the sixth grade, was a natural-born teacher. There was no doubt about that. She understood the habits of children as thoroughly as the naturalist does some of the most common species of lower animals. She never grew tired of sitting at the window during the short recess watching the children at play and studying their habits of thought and action. She always had a good story to tell illustrating the pleasant side of their lives—those points of character that are creditable, showing their sympathetic, humorous, and patriotic qualities. She was able to find more virtue than vice in the meanest child in school. She emphasized this virtue—nourished it with her love till it grew big enough to successfully fight the vice that was always its next door neighbor.

Miss White's friends who were teaching with her usually began by stimulating the vicious side of the

child by attacking it, thus building up stronger every day the very traits of character most to be despised. Miss White unconsciously built up the virtues—made them so strong and thrifty that the vices were smothered out. Should you ask her about this she would open her eyes with surprise, because she is perfectly ignorant of her own great powers. She is natural-born to it, but always feels that she is not handling *this* girl or *that* boy just right. When a child does not respond to her efforts she feels that she has missed touching the right key and never rests till she has tried them all—all of which she has any knowledge. To the children that were overflowing with energy she gave work that was pleasing to absorb it, so that good might come from it instead of trouble. Half the trouble teachers have in governing comes from the misdirected energy of the pupils. She likewise called into active use the talents for music, drawing, literature, poetry, that different pupils possessed in varying degrees, and made them serve as supports to weaker traits of character.

It was fortunate indeed for Phelps Graham and another boy, *Tony Rumery, that after all their trials they should fall under the influence of Miss White. Tony had just come into the ward during the summer, and when school re-opened in the fall he and Phelps Graham found themselves seated side by side. We might have expected a common sym-

*The incidents in the life of Tony Rumery are gleaned in part from a true story told by Dr. A. E. Winship of Boston.

pathy between the boys, but the expected seldom comes to pass. They eyed each other across the aisle with contempt—Tony taking in Phelps' insignificant stature, and Phelps, Tony's uncouth and coarse-appearing person. The only reason they didn't have trouble at once the first time they got together on the playground was because Tony had larger game to look after.

Tony Rumery was just as much a natural-born fighter as Miss White was a natural-born teacher. He began fighting the very day he was born as near as his mamma could recollect. He had fought every day of his life since, generally speaking, There may have been days when he missed, but if there were he made up for it by fighting twice on other days.

He not only had fought all these short years of his life, but he had been fought. It is also a fact beyond dispute that he had been beaten by every teacher he had ever known. His father began the process when Tony was a chubby baby, and later had kept pace with the teachers. When he was ten years old his father had beaten him so brutally with a stick that the lad carries a scar over his right ear to this day, and it was years before he got over the physical effect of that one blow.

One day, in the other ward across the tracks where Tony attended school in the fifth grade, the teacher was having a terrible time with him. There was no doubt about Tony's being able to make a *time* for most teachers. He had been so bad the

teacher was almost distracted. She had tried all sorts of punishments but none were effective, so after Tony had laid on the last straw she called in the principal. They went over the ground and passed sentence. The sentence was to be a whipping by the principal that the boy would not forget till his dying day. At recess they requested all pupils to leave the room except Tony. When they were all out the curtains were drawn and the doors were locked. After all was ready the beating began. The cries of the boy were heard by the other pupils on all parts of the playground, and they gathered in groups with bated breath and watched the curtained window.

It was a terrible spectacle—those preparations—those cries—those curtained windows. Does it not all seem horrible? Yet it all happened as recorded; there is no exaggeration. They did not know it, but they were teaching Tony new methods of torture, or stimulating his ideas of old ones with which he had long since grown too familiar.

There were several rough boys in the sixth grade and since Tony was a new pupil in that school he had to fight to gain supremacy over the would-be leaders of the playground. There was Phillip Mayes, who had, before Tony's arrival, bullied all the boys, and was their acknowledged leader. When he couldn't get them into line as loyal followers with mere orders, he cuffed their ears; if that did not suffice, he punched them a few times in the ribs, just enough of either method not to call the

attention of the teacher to it. It is a fact few teachers are conscious of, that there is a king or bully on every playground. There may be two who are broad enough to recognize each other's prowess, who rule together, but the rule is, one playground, one king or one bully. These terms are not used synonymously. Sometimes the ruler is a king because of his real worth, manhood, and all that, but the bully is backed only by physical strength.

So just as soon as Tony had taught Phillip Mayes that a new king had come to rule over the playground, he found little trouble in maintaining his supremacy. One day, however, during the first week, he ran on to unobtrusive Phelps Graham and ordered him to do something, peremptorily, and just as peremptorily Phelps told him to go to thunder. Tony was amazed to find anyone who dared to speak to him in that tone of voice, especially so spindling a boy as Phelps Graham. He must be taught, and no one could do it so well as Tony, so he proceeded to the task. Phelps' face and body began to twitch, and his eyes shot out little rays of wrath. It is enough to say that Phelps was beaten but not conquered.

Most boys would have had one eye on the window to see if the teacher was looking, but not these boys. Tony fought for fun and didn't care who saw it. Phelps fought because he was blind with anger.

The teacher was conscious of the turmoil on the playground and she was interested in it. She

actually felt no annoyance, but rather studied the situation with the delight of a student who has found a complex problem worthy of his powers. She even warmed up to those would-be kings on the playground. Such battles, prompted by the same spirit, take place among the wild herds in the forest, as well as among the herds of civilized men. They all afford very interesting studies.

Miss White had heard Tony's history time and again, from her fellow teachers in the other ward, and had pondered much on what method she should first try in an effort to tone down his turbulent spirit. He was a son of Bohemia, and many a generation of strenuous life lay back of him, all to be considered as a mantle of charity by the teacher so that sympathy might enter largely into her treatment of him. As she contemplated his case her mind ran back to that wild and hard, half barbaric life of his ancestors. She did not wonder at Tony's desire for the strenuous. She was filled with sympathy for him in his eternal conflict with this exact and prosaic life of ours.

She rightly eliminated the rod from consideration, as it was certain from past experience of other teachers that Tony would not succumb to that influence. When the day's work closed she had not yet decided what she would do. She asked both Tony and Phelps to remain after school. When all the pupils were gone she looked at the boys sitting quietly in their seats. There was not a sound in the room. Empty schoolrooms are

oppressive. She called the boys to come forward and sit on the front seat. Phelps' blackened eyes and bruised face, and Tony's belligerent countenance spoke volumes. It was a critical moment. Would she be able to do the right thing?

She was perplexed, and as she gazed thoughtfully at her desk her eye caught the title of a book of classic stories for boys. She picked it up casually, and as she flipped through the pages her gaze fell on the title, "A Story of How Casper Saved His Brethren." With a ray of hope, not knowing what else to do, she began to read, and in a few moments, as soon as they knew it wasn't a preaching, the boys began to listen. Further on they became interested and then animated. When the climax of the story was reached, where brave, strong Casper stood like a god before the great horde of intruders and beat them back and thus saved his own friends and people from destruction, Tony's admiration knew no bounds, and Phelps had forgotten his wounded feelings and bruised face.

"Golly, Phelps, but ain't he a brave chap?"

"You bet he is," responded Phelps with enthusiasm.

Then they began to ask questions about him and the other people, and about the book that had such a wonderful story in it. The teacher read the titles of all the other stories in the book and the boys speculated on what they could be about. They had unconsciously left their seats and were leaning over the desk looking at the book and the pictures.

The teacher was animated and smiling. She told me afterward that she actually forgot all about the fight and the reason for the detention of the boys until she realized that she had kept them almost an hour. Then she said she didn't have the heart to spoil their dream by mentioning the matter. She led them to the door hand in hand and bade them good-night. She heard them passing under her window both talking at once about Casper and his wonderful deed, and they went on till they got to Phelps' home, unconscious of anything but that story. Phelps' mamma was standing at the entrance and had noted their enthusiasm. As soon as they saw her Phelps began to tell her about the story, to be interrupted by Tony with mock illustrations of how Casper did it. So busy were they telling it Phelps' mamma didn't get a chance to ask Phelps what blackened his eyes and bruised his face until the story ended. Then she asked:

"Phelps, what's the matter with your face?"

Tony looked ashamed and hung his head. Phelps hurried to say:

"That's all right mamma; we all got into a rough-and-tumble at school to-day, and I got hurt a little, but it don't hurt now, mamma, and we have had a splendid time; ain't we, Tony?"

"You bet we hev," responded that worthy, and he sidled off, casually saying, "but I got to git fer home now." He picked up a clod and fired it at a knot-hole on a near-by board fence and with a hop,

skip and a hand-spring for good measure, scampered off home.

Perhaps as he went along he remembered what a nice thing it was for Phelps to shield his meanness by lying to his mamma, thus saving him whatever humiliation his coarse nature might have been capable of feeling under the circumstances, had she known that he, Tony Rumery, had bruised her beloved son.

At any rate, whatever Tony may have thought, the next morning found him at the teacher's desk looking at that wonderful book. He had evidently forgotten his fight with Phelps. He was used to such things. He loved to fight, and he had never before been known to leave the playground where he could romp and do things for any amusement in the schoolhouse. His acts that day had been flavored with the valor of Casper. His energies heretofore had been an outflowing without an object in view, just simply a case of blowing off steam or bursting. It was the energy of nature and it had been misdirected by human agencies.

All day Miss White had pondered over the matter. She felt that she must do something that night, sure, to make Tony feel that she would not tolerate fighting. At the last recess the boys took another look at the book that contained the story of Casper, and asked the teacher if she would read to them again. They had forestalled her, as she had intended to keep them in anyway. So after she

had read them another story she thought it time to say something.

"Boys, I want to talk to you to-night about a serious matter—"

Tony flared up at once on the defensive.

"What are you goin' to talk about? If it's about fightin' you needn't say a word because 'twon't do no good. I jist have to fight, and I can't help it. I'd ruther fight 'n eat. No chance in this world fer fightin' men any more, nuther, like there was in them old Greek times. I'z born too late, an' I wish I'z dead, that's what I do."

Tony sank into his seat dejectedly. It just seemed to him as if all the light in the world had gone out—all the things he loved to do were saturated with vinegar. Now this was a point where a loving heart and a discerning mind were necessary. Miss White was on the threshold of a great climax. Would she be great enough to grasp the situation? What would she say to Tony? Would she begin a lot of useless preaching about the evils of fighting? Would she understand the heart of the boy that was so full of the love for it that there was room for nothing else? Here is what she did, and she did it without a reason. One thing guided her; the heart-cry of that boy, that there was no place in the world now-a-days for fighting men as of old, and therefore no hope for him, brought forth a flood of sympathy. She felt so keenly with him the sad state of his feelings that she longed to do something to make the future look

brighter. Impulsively she leaned over and with great enthusiasm, said:

"Tony, I know what you can do. You can be a great man some day, too, if you will do as I tell you. Listen now, Tony Rumery; you can stop the quarreling and fighting on the schoolground, if you are of a mind to do it. If you will use your great strength for a good purpose you can make every boy on the schoolground a gentleman in his play."

Tony, as the thought took hold of him, leaned over with his mouth open and excitedly replied:

"I can jist do it! If you say so, teacher, I will jist show these big bullies on the playground that they can't run over the little fellers. I'll stop quarrelin' and fightin'—Yes sir, or yes ma'am, I *can* do it."

"Of course Phelps is to help you, but you are both to promise me you won't do anything that isn't manly. You will always ask yourselves, 'Will I be ashamed to tell Miss White just what I have done?'"

The next forenoon at recess there was quite a clatter in the hall and a great deal of loud breathing just before the door was thrown open by Phelps, and Tony strode into the room—into the teacher's presence with a boy in each hand, held by the collar, and said:

"Now I want to say to you fellers, right here in the presence of yer teacher, that if I ever catch you fightin' agin on these schoolgrounds, I'll lick ye

both within an inch of yer lives. (Giving them a shake.) Do you hear?"

The boys *heard*, and by wise direction from Miss White, Captain Tony Rumery and Lieutenant Phelps Graham had the boys of the school lined up in good order and questions of honor were often under discussion. When the Captain couldn't decide it, Miss White was appealed to. She was always near by when needed, and by careful study of plans for self-government, she and Tony laid out a system that called for many officers and honorary credits. A citizen of exceptional honor and usefulness to the school wore a badge which gave him special privileges. As soon as a boy or girl could be trusted with a privilege without abusing it, this badge was pinned on his coat or dress by the teacher. It was also taken off when the citizen lapsed into evil ways. Thus the children were taught to control their passions and govern themselves. Miss White illustrated that boys are bad because of this misdirected energy.

At a very critical point in the lives of these two boys she came upon the scene and was great enough in heart and mind to grapple successfully with the situation. As a result of her efforts, Tony Rumery was lifted up out of his benighted self, and started on the road to better things in life. He read all the classic Greek stories he could find and finally hungered to read them in the original language. This desire made him study and Miss White was ever at his side to add fuel to the uncertain flame.

It took time—years—but she never took away from him this support. As he moved on from one teacher to another, he always came back to her for sympathy and encouragement. It was thus that through dark and wavering years he had a tower of strength near him which encouraged him to mount over one obstacle after another until the high school was finished, then the great university of California, and at last a scholarly and finished gentleman stood at the end and looked back through the hazy years to the old Tony Rumery. Strong in the afterglow of that old time was the sweet and hopeful face of Catherine White. To his turbulent spirit she had been a beacon light that no storm had ever dimmed, and now that he was safely anchored in a quiet harbor, he paid her a tribute beside which the gaining of the whole world is nothing.

Her reward was so great words cannot measure it.

During the year Phelps was with Miss White, he partially recovered his lost ground and was gradually taking a permanent interest in his studies when the year closed.

It remains to be told what manner of progress he made in the seventh and eighth grades.





PHELPS IN THE SEVENTH GRADE

VII



OR every good teacher Phelps had had, there had been a correspondingly bad one, so he had gained in one year only to lose in the next from the time he first entered the public schools.

Therefore, according to this law of alternation, he was due to have a warm time of it in No. 7. His sixth grade teacher, Miss White, was a born teacher, and her influence over him had been far-reaching indeed. But the impressionable stage of life is affected by all winds, good or ill, and the change of teachers from Miss White to Miss Ramsey was just like passing from a summer land to one full of rocks and snow. Tony Rumery and Phelps had grown better together under the refined influence of Miss White, and it was indeed fortunate for Tony that he was not able to be promoted, so he had the benefit of two years' work under Miss White. It would have been far

better for Phelps, also, considering his state of health, had he been retained in the sixth grade another year.

But however that may be, he passed into No. 7, and Miss Emma Ramsey began to clash with him from the first day.

But this was not all of his trouble. Late in September the greatest misfortune of all overtook him. His father, who had been his closest companion, sickened and died. His grief was unappeasable. He did not go to school for two weeks. Every day he would go to his father's office and hang around his desk. Mr. Brown, his father's partner, laughed and told stories in an effort to assuage his grief, but as soon as he was out of sight the boy would throw himself across his father's desk and cry out his bitter sorrow alone. To him there seemed to be no compensation. When Saturday afternoon came, the day he and his papa always had together, his loss was doubly emphasized. It was on these afternoons that they had always made their trips to the country afoot, and spent the time among the wild things along the creek. So this first Saturday afternoon after his papa had gone hence, he gazed longingly and sadly from the office window over housetops and vacant lots to the hazy country beyond. He could see the line of trees that marked the stream, and the great woods beyond that, and in imagination he could see the ground covered with the first fall of leaves, and the clear, cold pools in the creek trembling in anticipation of the coming

of the ice king. And strongly outlined amidst it all were he and his papa. The picture lured him, and taking his hat he hurried on out into the country through a shady lane, where the first yellow leaves had carpeted the ground. As he rustled through them, various insects skipped in confusion out of his way. A rabbit scurried out from under the hedge, and a blue jay scolded from the boughs above. He began to walk softly along the way so as to not disturb the wild things in their haunts. The rabbit reminded him of an incident when he and his papa were once tramping among the hazel brush. He came within a few feet of a rabbit snugly hidden under a tuft of grass. He whispered the information to his papa, and was in the act of striking the rabbit with his stick, when his father stopped him, and told him that rabbits were very much like human beings—that they had a home—that there were brothers and sisters, fathers, and mothers, and that, should he kill this one, they would miss him sadly at home, just as his mamma would miss him should some giant steal up and strike him dead. It all came back to him now so vividly he wondered how he could have ever been so heartless as to want to kill anything.

So, in his sorrow he imagined a father for everything he saw, and felt so keenly the value of life that he cried when by accident he crushed a beetle. He turned over a decayed log to find its home and to see if it really had brothers or sisters, or a father or mother to mourn over its death. He found sev-

eral others under the log, and was greatly relieved to find they paid little, if any, attention to their dead brother. But in making this investigation the boy grew wonderfully interested in their habits. A little farther on, down by the creek side, he found the path of a musk-rat, and a few moments later saw its owner swimming steadily on the clear, cool pool of water below. He crushed a twig under foot, and the rat dived out of sight into the depth of the pool, to reappear later at the mouth of his hole in the bank. All these living, moving things appealed to him wonderfully. The voice of the woods means, collectively, the voices of all the things in the woods, and nothing so pleased Phelps as to sit down quietly and become a part of the life; see it come and go and speculate on what it all meant. And there are so many living things, thousands more of them than ordinary people ever see. But Phelps and his papa had visited the homes of most of the larger species, and knew their voices and habits.

But, somehow, the woods were out of tune—the voices sad and discordant, and Phelps was so lonely he went back home earlier than was his custom. He tramped up the back walk alone, where for so many, many Saturdays he and his papa had tramped together, tired and hungry.

After two weeks out of school Phelps went back to Miss Ramsey. She remembered vaguely that Phelps had had some trouble at home—sickness, death or something—but within a day she forgot all

about that. It did not seem to have anything about it to hang to.

Miss Ramsey had a pointed nose, and perhaps this explains why people always got an impression that she could snoop into things quite successfully. Her inquisitiveness was so pronounced she was never happy save when on tours of investigation. Her power to hunt down a culprit and fix the guilt was something marvelous. She enjoyed it so much, and administered the punishment with such vigor that she seldom let the most trivial offense pass unnoticed. The children respected her power in this particular, but it produced no feeling of respect for her as a teacher or a woman. When among themselves they spoke of her as "Snoopy Ramsey." This faculty of "snooping" led her to a complete family history of each child in school. Not for the purpose of being able to better control the child, but for the sake of knowing all its weak points. When a boy violated a rule of the school her mind instantly recalled all the short-comings of his parents, which resulted in an inward denunciation of the whole breed as being beyond redemption. She made no allowance whatever for birth or circumstances of life. She was vindictive for the love of it.

Yet it must not be understood that Miss Ramsey had no good traits of character. There is good in every one, no matter how bad he may seem. But in Miss Ramsey's character there was little sweetness—little to love. She was cold and harsh. She

could cut out a little heart with words alone. Mixed in with all her instruction was a vein of sarcasm that blighted like a hot wind from the desert. If a child made a mistake, forgot his lesson, or failed to prepare it, he was doomed to a fate that a child most dreads, and one that injures his life more than a beating, physically.

Phelps was doomed to a hard time of it with Miss Ramsey. It was wholly an impossibility for two such persons to ever understand each other. They were like a fish and a bird—had no common ground on which to stand. To her Phelps seemed a pernickity, stuck-up kid. To him Miss Ramsey was a horrid, brutal woman. Perhaps his opinion was never formed into words, but that would be about the substance of it were it translated into English.

Phelps was not the only child that suffered from her sarcasm and lack of judgment, as will be seen.

Such a thing as an individual she did not consider in administering her rebukes and instructions. She thought of her pupils collectively, a thing of many parts, that moved and acted like a machine, no part requiring individual attention. Simply turn a lever, throw on the steam, and let it go. So, if some one committed an offense she would mount the platform at her desk and lecture the whole school on the subject. Maybe forty pupils out of the fifty knew nothing of the offense in question, and would never have thought about doing such a thing had she not suggested it to their minds. Perhaps for the first

time in their lives they thought of the possibility of doing just that very thing, and not being found out.

Phelps had many faults, like all boys, but on the whole he had grown up under the most favorable influences. His home life was ideal, and his family in comfortable circumstances. He was proud and dignified, and scorned deception or the use of vulgar language. Miss Ramsey's lectures always started his face to twitching, which was proof that he was stirred.

One morning, a month after Phelps' papa's death, and while he was still mellow with sorrow, a terrible scene took place in the schoolroom. After the last bell had ceased ringing Miss Ramsey stepped up onto her throne, and with an air of "something-awful's-going-to-happen" about her, she stood glancing fiercely down upon the school. Not a word was spoken for some time, but every child in the room could smell the sulphur in the air, and feel that something momentous was about to happen. It was sufficient to start Phelps' face twitching—just the air, the sulphur, you know. Some people exhale stuff like that; we can detect them afar off. After she had stood before them long enough to impress them with the great impending disaster she had nosed out, she cleared her throat, and pushed her nose to the front a few inches, and in a measured, penetrating tone of voice that sent a shudder through every child present, said:

"There's a thief in our midst!"

The children all started in their seats, and with

frightened eyes looked around the room for the monster, and not seeing him in the room, they all looked at her inquiringly and nervously. After an awe-inspiring silence of a few seconds, she went on:

“He’s right in this room. He’s one of you—which one I don’t know. But mark my words well! *I’ll get him!*”

The children all gave another start at this as if they were just as good as caught then. Many a poor little culprit trembled with fear as the eyes of other children who knew all the ordinary offenders were turned upon him. Little Sammy Bryant, who had often stolen apples from lunch baskets because he was most always hungry, cried and looked like a thief. Another little fellow who had been caught hiding a pencil he had picked up from the floor, was at once selected for the thief in question. The children seemed to know that Sammy only stole things to eat, and they associated nothing bad with his act. But what was stolen? Listen to Miss Ramsey. She will tell it with pleasure.

“Some thief (how she enjoyed that horrid word; it melted in her mouth like snow) crept into the cloak-room yesterday afternoon and *stole* some money from Susie Owen’s pocket. *Do you hear that?* I do not know yet who of you did it, but I have my opinion (at this she glared at certain culprits), and if he or she does not come to me and acknowledge the crime it will be so much the worse for him or her when I do find the right one.”

There were a few children in the room who had

no very well-founded ideas on the property rights of others, and this was probably the first thought they had on the feasibility of going through pockets in the cloak-room for loose change, and no doubt tried it the first opportunity thereafter. On the other hand there were a great many children present who were unconsciously outraged by her talk, and their sensitive natures coarsened.

When the scene was over they tried to settle down to work, but it was a difficult task. They could not study. The sensation was too great. The question of "Who is the thief?" bore heavily on their minds. The sensitive souls actually saw the thief between the lines; the inquisitive ones looked about over the room trying to spy out the ones that would likely steal money. In short the whole attention of the school was given up to the consideration of the question that forenoon.

At noon, as Phelps and Ellen walked home together, he confidentially expressed his fears to her that he might be suspected of the theft—that he was the only pupil excused from the room during the afternoon when the money was taken. They didn't tell their mamma of it at noon, but that night when Phelps couldn't go to sleep, and his mamma found him in a state of nervous collapse, he told her about it—about how during the afternoon he had not been able to get his lessons on account of it, and how he had been scolded roundly for it by the teacher. Ellen had also failed in her lessons out of sympathy for Phelps, and had also been scolded.

"Why, Phelps," the teacher had said to him, "I have seen you just gazing out of the window half the afternoon instead of studying your lessons. You are a good-for-nothing, idling away your time that way." She would upset the whole school, then scold them again for being upset. During the afternoon Ellen had felt so keenly the possibility of Phelps being accused, she had to tell one of her little friends about it, and she, in turn, told her friends about it, and then in an hour the whole school knew that Phelps Graham was the only boy who had left the room.

"Oh, ho!" said Miss Ramsey when she heard the story, "I see it all now. He is the criminal, and just what I might have expected from the pernicky stuck-up kid. All afternoon he was unable to do anything because of his guilty conscience. I'll fix him good and plenty."

It was after school hours when she heard the story, so she had to defer action till next morning. She could hardly wait. When the last bell ceased, she mounted her throne. Every child knew Phelps Graham was the thief. The teacher knew it. Phelps did not know that he was yet suspected. But the awful air was again in the room, and no one touched a book, but waited expectantly.

"*We have found the thief!*" she announced. "I will not name him now until I have talked with him, but we all know who he is. I am going to wait a day to see if he is man enough to come to me of his own accord." Then she looked straight at

Phelps. Poor boy! The whole school stared at him with contempt. At recess he was ostracised and called a thief by more boys than one. All of them—everybody—seemed to forget that it was only a month since he had seen his father buried. His home was still in mourning. He and Ellen could stand it no longer, so at noon, when they told their mamma what had befallen them at school, she decided they need not go back for a few days. She said nothing about it—only cried. Her spirit was broken. She did not even feel like going to the teacher and making a protest. What booted it? They had lost hope—everything, she thought. Phelps wanted to quit school for good, as he could better help his mother by earning something.

When Phelps and Ellen did not come back in the afternoon Miss Ramsey thought, "Oh, he's trying to escape me." All the children thought so, too. The news spread to the other rooms in the building. By the second day most everybody knew and believed Phelps was a thief. But there was one who didn't, maybe more, and when Miss White in the sixth grade heard about it she went straight as she could go to Miss Ramsey and told her it could not be possible. Phelps Graham was no thief, and she ought to know he wasn't just by looking at him. Miss Ramsey was astonished at the idea, but as Miss White was so positive, she began to waver, and sure enough that very night, after Phelps had stood a convicted thief for two whole days, a little girl came to her crying, saying that she

had found the money in her lunch basket the day it was lost, where it had fallen from the coat pocket and lodged, and that she brought it back the next morning to give to the teacher, but before she could do so the teacher had made her announcement of the theft, and then she was afraid to say anything about it.

How easy it all came about, and how naturally, yet think of the sorrow and shame resulting. All because the teacher lacked judgment. Miss White, who knew how Phelps had been driven out of school, cried about it, and that very night went to his home and took him in her arms and told him the mystery had been cleared up and he was entirely exonerated. Ah, the sunshine she brought to them in their sorrow! Did Miss Ramsey hurry over to excuse herself? No. She waited till the next morning, and made a conditional and half-hearted apology for the conduct of the school in hastily passing judgment. She, herself, had wisely waited until the truth could be known. See her sneak out of it. It is so like her type. She would have made us all like her better, and feel sorry for her mistake for her own sake had she followed the example of Miss White. It is no disgrace to acknowledge a mistake, nor is it a weakness, as some imagine. On the other hand it is really a noble quality, and should be cultivated. They say nothing is lost, that everything created, every word uttered goes on forever, and the only way to neutralize an evil act is to start a good one after it. Miss Ramsey sent on the waves of time her mistaken deeds, but never a good one to plead

for her forgiveness. She could have done much to wipe it all out and make Phelps feel at home again in the school, but she did not do it. Phelps and Ellen came back—Phelps quiet and shame-faced. He imagined that he was doubted, and as a result did not associate with other children any more than he had to. He lost interest in his work, and failed in his lessons so often he was reported to the principal. The principal took the matter up with the teacher and the boy, and supposed that he had settled it. Matters grew worse. Phelps begged his mamma to let him quit school—that it was no use; he couldn't learn anything. She told him she had promised his papa to educate him—put him through college no matter what happened, and she must not let him quit. Maybe something would happen that would change matters.

Before the year closed, the principal, who taught in the eighth grade, had Phelps before him again. This time he threatened to use the rod if Phelps did not apply himself, but it only made the boy duller still. He would sit, when not excited, quietly in his seat gazing at a blank wall with a dull countenance, now and then starting up suddenly, and with a painful, hopeless expression, go to work again. But he would give it up in a few minutes—get completely lost as his gaze sought the woods along the creek, in plain sight from his window. The dull school-room, miserable lessons, all so mean in comparison to all that lay budding and bursting into life out there. There where he and his papa had gone to

school together—Nature's school. Yes, indeed, he was out of tune; there was no helping hand to reach out for him to place him in harmony with his surroundings. Miss White was too busy with other boys and girls like Phelps to be able to help him there.

"Keep on, Phelps dear," his mamma would say. "Something may happen to help us. Don't give up yet."

When the year closed Miss Ramsey actually thrust Phelps into the eighth grade, notwithstanding his marks. She wanted to get rid of him, and the principal promised to take the tucks out of him when he once had him in his room. The principal was a man, and he delighted in showing his teachers how he did this and that. Let us watch him.





PHELPS IN THE EIGHTH GRADE

VIII



PRINCIPAL James Brooks was not a strong man, either mentally or physically. It was apparent to the discerning that he was not the sort of man whose habits and thoughts appealed to boys. It was equally apparent that he

had not enough of red blood in his veins, and manly ways to attract the girls. In short, when a lad he was called a sissy-boy by his mates. Not the sort of man to set up as a healthy example for young people to copy. The only time these young people copied the professor was in mock comedy when he wasn't looking.

But he was a man who had ideas and liked to appear well before the people. When a teacher would appeal to him for help in a difficult case that would likely make trouble, he always looked wise and evaded taking a position on the subject.

Phelps' case was an exception. When Miss
9 Ramsey had brought the matter before him the

year before he took a strong stand on the subject. Phelps' father was dead and his mother was not likely to make any complaint. But his advice was worse than useless, because it was based on false premises. He had jumped at the conclusion, gained by a superficial glance at the facts, that the boy was simply lazy and dull—could do no great thing in life because he was not naturally endowed, but he could do much more if he were not so lazy.

So when the professor found the boy in his room and the fact confronted him that he must put his advice to Miss Ramsey into practice, he wavered a little. Yet he watched the boy for a week and took important notes along the lines laid down in the *Child Study Monthly*, and, a la Dr. Wiseacre, he made quite a display of his data and conclusions before the teachers' meeting on Friday afternoon. He felt proud of himself. Feeling that he had made quite a discovery, he sent his observations to the *Monthly* for publication, should they seem suitable to the editor.

In spite of his observations and conclusions that Phelps' main trouble was indifference and downright laziness, he made no progress whatever in correcting the trouble.

Mr. Brooks told the teachers after a month or so of trials, that from the very first it was apparent that Phelps' case was hopeless. In the meantime Phelps had reached the same conclusion. It had been dinned into his ears so long that he was a dullard he had begun to believe it thoroughly, so thor-

oughly that he never ceased imploring his mamma to let him quit school. The subject never seemed to be out of his mind. But his mamma would always plead for a little longer trial. "Something may happen to help us." That was her favorite statement.

One day it occurred to Phelps that if he had a position it would help him to win his mamma's consent, so secretly he began to hunt for a place among the merchants of the town. To his surprise he found them all anxious to help him. In fact, several of them talked the matter over among themselves and finally arranged for him to begin as a clerk in one of the large stores. All this in deference to his widowed mother and in kindly remembrance of their friend, his father.

Phelps hurried home with the good news to his mother. When he had finished telling her how he had been treated, she burst into tears.

"Oh Phelps, you must not quit yet. Try just a little longer—a month anyway. You know your father insisted that I must educate you, no matter what happened. Would you have me forget that?"

Phelps remembered it all and was confounded with his perplexing and humiliating position. There was nothing left for him to do but try a little longer.

"Something may happen, Phelps, dear, to help you. Let us not lose faith yet."

Phelps knew all that by heart, and with great disgust and sadness he went back to school. But as the days dragged by his disgust for the school

increased. Each day found his dreamy, dead countenance growing deader still, if such were possible. Try as hard as he might he could not get hold of his studies. The professor, a good enough man in his way, had no notion of what the boy's real troubles were. He thought he knew the boy was dull and lazy and day after day held him up to ridicule before the school with the idea of arousing his pride.

It was at a teachers' meeting on Friday evening that he brought up the Phelps case, and told them about his method of treating it.

"Stir his pride by shaming him before the school is my method," he remarked in finishing.

Miss White was present, and in her calm, serious dignity was listening to the professor's complaint. Indeed they were all there—all of Phelps' teachers from the beginning, save the nameless one, his first teacher who had been married for three or four years and had "brats" of her own to knock about; so let her pass. This subject of Phelps was a serious matter to most of them. They all had something to remember him by, and some of them should have been grateful to him for the lessons they learned at his expense.

At the end of the long recitation seat sat big-hearted Marie Anderson who had only the most pleasing recollection of Phelps as a bright-eyed lad. She could even recall the sensation of joy and pride she felt that day long ago as he clung to her fingers when she passed him to Miss Noyes—when he didn't want to be promoted, and she could hear his

boyish voice, "I wish I could allus stay in your room."

Sitting by her side was Miss Noyes, bluff and good-natured as ever, but ever so much wiser, and she remembered Phelps so well her laughter and jokes were stilled for an hour while he was under discussion. She had to live over that hateful scene again when she had whipped him for (as she thought) making faces at her.

Then there was the sweet and gentle Miss Adams who had an epoch making event to mentally recall. She could see that little sitting-room and hear those voices coming back to her out of the silence—even the grave; and she felt grateful that she had once heard them in reality. It gave her light that she might better see the way.

Then there was sharp-voiced, cold-blooded Miss Yerkes. She indifferently remembered several of her tantrums while Phelps was in her room. She recalled having knocked his head against the door one day. But it did not matter much to her now. It was only a memory.

But whatever may have been the varying weaknesses of these teachers they had all grown better together. The leavening influence of Miss White had been felt by them all. At every teachers' meeting she told them heart stories she had drawn from wayward, weak and oppressed humanity as it drifted by her daily. God bless her! She always found their secret sorrows. Into her open heart they all poured their troubles from the high school

down. Often she would say in confidence to Miss Yerkes, or Miss Noyes, or Miss Adams, as the case might be, something to this effect: "Little Jimmy Owens has much trouble at home—his papa beats him and he doesn't have enough to eat half the time." Miss White knew what the boy needed at school so she hoped this bit of information would help the teacher to deal justly with the lad; or it might be that some girl needed the care of a mother, or any of the numerous needs of a large body of children. And she always did it so considerately and conscientiously it bore immediate fruit. She never found fault with any one, but was always charitable toward the erring.

Even Miss Ramsey, alias "Snoopy Ramsey," always gave heed and bowed in deference when Miss White added her mite to the argument.

The professor wanted evidence to prove his preconceived idea that Phelps was a lazy good-for-nothing lad. But of all his teachers not one of them raised a voice against him. Miss White told how he had developed in her room, and in detail gave his and Tony Rumery's experience. It should have been proof that he was bright enough. But the professor could not see how it could be true, and Miss Ramsey thought him rather dull. So the subject was dropped and nothing gained, or if anything was gained it was lost again immediately thereafter. Miss White, Miss Anderson and Miss Adams were certain there was good in the boy and hoped for his ultimate success. The others thought

there might be but it was so tangled up they had not been able to do much with it. Miss Ramsey, his last teacher, had stereotyped his present condition after creating it, without ever suspecting she was anything short of perfection. Principal Brooks could not inspire either admiration or confidence in the boy.

Two weeks had passed since Phelps had had his last interview with his mother, and still nothing had happened to help him. It was apparent to her that she could not hold out much longer unless something did happen.

"What could happen?" she said over and over to herself. Nothing seemed possible that would help. She was in despair. So was the boy.

But something did happen, impossible though it seemed. One morning at school the professor did not appear. Later it was learned he was sick. One week passed and the school got along with a substitute. Then it was learned that Mr. Brooks would have to give up the school on account of his health.

But how was this to help Phelps, you ask? This is how it came about. When it was ascertained that Mr. Brooks would not be able to continue his work, a new principal came to take his place permanently. This gave Mrs. Graham hope, so she urged Phelps to try the new principal before he decided to quit school for good.

Mr. Hayes, the new principal, was a real man. The boys began to ape his manners right away.

They looked up to him and listened to all he had to say to them. He understood boys well, and it was not long until he had taken a sort of inventory of the school. At first the teacher sees only the pronounced things, like very bright scholars, very dull ones, very bad ones, very nice ones, and so on. But in a day or so he begins a deeper analysis of them. Then he sees all the different shades of temperaments, and different degrees of habits fixed, and forming. All these are guide-posts to proper conduct on the part of the teacher.

It wasn't long until Mr. Hayes saw a dull, listless countenance turned toward the great woods over beyond the creek. Later in the day he saw the same hopeless face again, and he became impressed by it and wondered why it *was* listless and hopeless. Somehow it reminded him how he had felt once himself away back there when he was a boy. He could almost feel the angel hand on his head then—the one that satisfied that longing in the heart for human sympathy. So much did this face impress him that he strolled back and in passing casually spoke kindly to the boy and laid his hand on his shoulder. Ah, there was so much in that touch—stuff on which hungry hearts are fed! Phelps turned away his head to hide the tears he was ashamed of. Can you explain those tears? Where they came from—the conflicting emotions and all?

Mr. Hayes knew nothing of the boy's history—not even his name when he first saw his listless

countenance. But the next day he began to discover why Phelps was so listless and hopeless. He did not understand his lessons. Everything was difficult and he showed every sign of being afraid.

But he looked over all this and in all his explanations to the class he looked at Phelps. It helped to hold Phelps' attention on the lesson and by degrees he was able to get some sense out of it all.

At recess Mr. Hayes apparently happened to pass Phelps' seat and as he came back stopped and had a pleasant little chat with him. There was something so genuine about this Mr. Hayes. That touch on the arm—that kindly eye—the fellow feeling—ah, it was all so good, coming after all the trouble and heartache he had experienced. Mr. Hayes asked him to stay awhile after school, if he were not in a hurry; he would like to get better acquainted with him and his work.

That was a great day in Phelps' life. Somehow or other he was led on to talk about everything he ever did—his trips to the country—his love of the woods—his hopes for the future—his position in the store; in short, almost everything, and this man listened to it all as if it were a new and wonderful tale to him. It is a great power, this faculty of being able to live with others in their own hearts for a time. They like it, too, and it makes them love you. You become heart of their heart, soul of their soul. Not since he had left Miss White had he ever talked that way with any one. He had grown secretive and had shut himself up from every one.

Even his mother had lost something of his life. But to Mr. Hayes he poured out his hopes and fears as if he had known him forever instead of for only a day. The next day Phelps went to school with some hope for the first time since he left Miss White's room. But his lessons were the same hard things to study, yet they did not seem so hard to recite. Mr. Hayes made them so plain and easy. In the geography class Phelps wasn't able to answer any of the printed questions at the end of the lesson and to his surprise the teacher never asked him any of those. Mr. Brooks always asked him several of them and showed the class how stupid he was not to be able to answer them. But Mr. Hayes *did* ask him something. The lesson was on the products, soil, climate, etc., of the middle states, and he asked Phelps to tell the class what kind of trees grew in the big woods over across the creek. Could Phelps answer that question do you think? He blushed deeply but after Mr. Hayes had turned the attention of the class for a moment to another matter so the boy would have a chance to blush it out unobserved, he came back to the subject, and Phelps told them of all the kinds of trees that grew in the big woods, and which ones were used in the lumber trade. There was not a boy or girl in the class that could do it as well as Phelps did. So it happened every day in every class. Somehow Mr. Hayes would twist things around so that he would have Phelps telling about something that no one else had observed.

In the reading lesson there was something about nature in some form that would help Phelps out when if he had been held to the regular questions he would have failed. In arithmetic he would have to tell about the practical side of the subject as he had seen it knocking about with his father. It became a habit with Phelps to remain after school and visit with the teacher. Sometimes there would be several other boys and girls, all chatting and laughing together with Mr. Hayes. He crept into their hearts and stayed there. Instead of "snooping" into things like Miss Ramsey, they kept nothing from him. Errors and faults were not crimes in Mr. Hayes' eye, and they would talk over the matter among themselves just to see how they might be able to avoid them. Mr. Hayes never told Phelps that he should not quit school, but he set about to see that he did not want to quit. Gradually the work grew easier for him. His befogged mind began to clear up as he became comfortable in his class and secure from ridicule. Each step made him more confident of his strength.

Phelps had told Mr. Hayes a great deal about the big woods over across the creek, so one Saturday he went with Phelps to see them. They took a lunch with them and made a day of it. It was a day in late winter and fortunately the sun shone brightly and there was no snow. Phelps showed him the home of a certain old horned owl, and gave him quite a history of its family as he had been able to observe it. Then there was the wolf's den,

and the old fox squirrel's, and many homes of denizens of the woods that had to be visited. Then the different kind of trees were noted, and he could tell where certain plants grew in summer, the May-apple beds and the dog-tooth violets.

In the spring when the first plants began to shoot up with vigor, and the meadows were taking on their coat of green, the principal announced one day from the platform that he was going to the big woods on Saturday for a day's outing and any of his pupils could go that cared to do so. He knew they would all go, so after it was decided he told them they might just as well make the trip profitable so they would turn it into a natural history class. Then he went on and told them that he would have to get them a teacher. They insisted that he should teach them. He told them he didn't know enough about the big woods to do it properly, but he knew of a teacher he might be able to get. Then after sufficient pause to make it effective he said: "If Phelps Graham will take the class and teach it all the things he taught me a month or so ago on a trip over there, it will be splendid."

And it was splendid—the climax of that little speech. It redeemed a poor boy before the eyes of the school from a position of shame and ridicule to one of respect. There he sat stunned by the pleasure of being treated as if he had a heart and mind. He could not look up. Every eye in the room was turned toward him, as had occurred times without number, but not from such pleasurable

cause. Phelps had gained much lost ground in the eye of the school in the last two months, but still the surprise reached the proportions of a sensation. Here was presumably the dullest boy in the school placed in charge of the class as a teacher in natural history. It was discussed in many homes that night, and many hearts were made glad to know that Phelps was brighter than had been supposed.

The class went to the woods next day as per program and was conducted by Mr. Hayes through Phelps. It seemed to the school that Phelps did it all, but it would have been done vastly different if Mr. Hayes had not been there to say a word here and direct a little there. The trip was voted a great success, and the kind of information Phelps had was popularized. Up to this time no one paid any attention to it nor thought it of any value to know such things. But as soon as Mr. Hayes said it was a good thing and he liked it, it became a fad among his pupils.

So it was in this manner that Phelps Graham got a new grip on the real things of life, and he was old enough to retain it with greater security. His mind so long dwarfed because of his extreme sensitiveness and the ignorance of certain of his teachers, began to bud like a rose, and in time showed signs of opening in full bloom.

AFTERWORD.

It has been a great many years now since Phelps Graham and Mr. Hayes worked together in No. 8,

but through them all the boy, now a man in his prime, has not forgotten the hand he clutched in the darkness of his youthful years. The author has before him a letter received by Mr. Hayes from his former student which tells its own story.

UNIVERSITY PLACE, Jan. 20, 1900.

DEAR MR. HAYES:

I have just learned of your location, and hasten to make myself known to you. It has been so long ago, and so many good things have come to you, and to me, since those old days in No. 8, you may have forgotten me entirely. You have little reason for remembering me. But, my dear friend, you will never know the depth of my feelings for you until you are utterly lost and alone in some great, dark deep, where no human soul is in sight—where nothing but hopeless despair surrounds you on all sides. When you are ready to sink into the ocean of wretchedness around you there comes a smiling, kindly face through the mist, and you see loving hands reaching out to you in the darkness—you feel them touch your poor cold ones and draw you up out of it all—hold you in a warm brotherly clasp where the sun shines and where there is joy in living. Ah, not till then, my friend, will you know how I feel toward you. You gave me life—the first hope—and set me on the right road to regain my natural self from utter destruction. There was another who labored with you, Miss White, the noblest, bravest, and most loving woman I can

now recall that I have ever met. Peace be with her! To her also I owe a debt of gratitude that only a lifetime of service devoted to the struggling, needy students of this university can repay.

So remembering all the sorrows of my youth and all the blessings you and Miss White brought me, I am trying to keep your examples ever before my eyes. I am a teacher of natural history as a result of your help and advice, and have put my observations into print in the form of several text-books which I am sending you by to-day's express so you may see for yourself whether you builded well or ill that day, now so long past. It was the turning point in my life, and I am now trying to make my life like yours. I am looking down into all the dark places in this school, hunting hourly and daily for those white, hopeless faces that are looking up for a ray of light, and I am leaning over trembling with fear lest my grasp be not firm enough to lift them out. Ah, my friend, I know what it is to grasp a hand that is not steady—one that does not have eyes back of it that see clearly.

If you have not changed since we met last you will know that I am paying a loving tribute to your greatness of heart, and soundness of mind. And I want you to say to Miss White, whom I now understand is your beloved wife, that the memory of her dear face and of the touch of her tender hands has never dimmed, and often at twilight I sit thinking of her, and her brave and gentle deeds.

God bless her soul, and yours! We shall probably never be able to meet face to face again but I shall always cherish you both in memory.

PHELPS.

THE END





A PREACHMENT

IX



YOU MAY ask after reading these sketches of Phelps' teachers, what should a real teacher—one born to the work—be like? What should she do? How should she feel?—in short, you may want a detailed description

of her. But this description is only possible in a general way. The roads to success are many, and our standards differ as men differ, yet it is sufficient that we agree on the underlying principles of the subject.

It is agreed that Phelps' teachers were not all born to the work. They are living examples of the different standards men have as to what a teacher should be. They were selected by business men and accepted by the city superintendent—all of whom are good average citizens. Therefore it follows that Miss Ramsey, Miss Yerkes and the *nameless one* will find places in the public schools so long as the masses of the people have a

crude and underestimated idea of the great work placed in the hands of our teachers. These ladies are not teaching because there are not others to be had fitter for the work, but because we do not thoroughly appreciate the importance of it. We take any one who comes, with never a thought that if the right ones do not come we still have the privilege of going out into the highways and hedges, stores and factories—anywhere, where great, strong, tactful souls may be found, and bringing them into the work they are fitted for. If we were only discerning enough we could find them everywhere. Some are plowing corn, some working on the railroad, some delving in mines, some preaching, clerking, and practicing law. In the business world we go out and hunt the right man and bring him to the task he can do best. In the school board world they line up and take turns for the places made vacant by death and matrimony. It can scarcely be termed a selection at all. The masses of the people are not impressed with the importance of having big-hearted, clever people as teachers. Anybody can teach a school, especially if it be small, they will tell you, because main strength is not needed to keep order. Any one can act as county superintendent, they think, who can examine a manuscript. So if a man has been unfortunate in business, if death has stalked into his family, or if it be a poor woman who has a family to support, or some poor girl who wants to educate herself, the people, ever ready, as a rule, to help those

in need, will put them in as public school teachers, or into some public office. It is easier to help the needy by giving them a public position than to take it out of our own pockets. So that is the way we partially fill our schoolrooms with teachers, and our public offices with servants.

Therefore there is much need of educating the masses to the great importance of selecting our teachers from the very cream of humanity. Honor the profession and good men and women will seek it. Fill your schoolrooms with a nondescript corps of teachers and the salary sinks to their level—the calling ceases to be attractive to those who have talents for uplifting the community.

Since in most states the county superintendent is the principal authority for issuing teachers' certificates, it is very important that he be discerning enough to reject the applications of such teachers as Miss Ramsey, Miss Yerkes, and the *nameless one*. His duties are so fraught with consequences for good or evil to the public that few people who appreciate this fact would care to take on such a burden of responsibility. Yet like that of school-teaching, the aspirants for this office are plentiful and the people are the examiners before whom they appear. Would that they were sufficiently discerning to reject those applicants who are not able to read a human heart. It is very important that this officer be able to look into your very heart. If he is wise he will do so the very first thing he does when you appear before him for an examination.

He will want to know what sort of a thing it is. He will want to know if it is sincere, sympathetic and hopeful. He will want to know if you love children, and can make them love you. He will want to know if you are quiet, forceful, energetic, and sensible. All these things are important factors, and the question for you to ask yourself is, can you fill these conditions.

Technical information on subjects required to be taught, of course is important, but it is a secondary matter. Some examiners may only require of you an examination on the branches of study, and upon the result of your showing will depend your certificate. But your success will depend on what sort of a heart you have. All these forms are nothing so far as *your* future is concerned. If your heart is not right you cannot succeed.

So if I were you, I would take an inventory of myself before I appeared before the examiner, and see just how I stood. By all means you ought to find that you are honest, that is *believe in honesty*. None of us is so very honest, but it is important that we believe in honesty. You ought to be thinking about your work and planning for it. If you are, and if you are sincere about it, all this will show in your countenance when you go before the examiner, and will be placed to your credit. It is not sufficient that you act well and look clean of mind and body. You must be just what you seem. The person who acts other than he feels may de-

ceive the examiner, but he deceives himself more. He simply piles barriers in his road to success.

When you have fitted yourself for this important work, you will show it in every line of your face, and the carriage of your body. A natural teacher can be felt as well as seen. You will have about you an air of gentleness, and sweetness of temper that will fill the superintendent's office with sunshine. He will brighten up under the influence of your presence just as your pupils will when you appear before them. He is looking for just such a person as you appear to him to be. Every sense he has comes to your support and tells him you are pure gold. In a short time he has placed you on a high pedestal and is hoping he may keep you there. Here is the point in your career where you will see the value of being the *real thing*, and not a sham. It pays you, not directly, perhaps, in dollars and cents, but in that chastened and respectful feeling you have for yourself as you feel the reverence and respect that is shown you on every hand.

Teachers of that kind are so scarce every one of them should be cared for as loving wards of the people. You may say the people do not care for them—that they like shams better, but you deceive yourself when you say it. They may not always show their appreciation in a substantial way, but you will always find that the real teachers are loved, and the good they do is ample reward. Then, too, dollars and cents cannot pay for all the heart they give to their people. Nothing but heart

in return can cancel such a debt. They, *only*, have learned to live so as to get the most out of life. They know how to make school *life*, not a preparation for *life*.

But on the other hand, if your superintendent finds no indications of deep-rooted honesty of purpose, and special talent for teaching, he will quietly turn down your application and mark it rejected. He may not say why he rejects you. In fact, he may not be able to tell just what your defect is. But outward indications lead him to believe you are wrong—that your heart is out of tune, but he cannot precisely locate the cause of the discord.

You will feel quite ugly about it when he notifies you that you have failed. You will say you are just as fit as anybody, and especially that Mary Jones, who got a certificate the same day you failed. You may even believe it. Perhaps no one has ever been kind enough to you to put a finger on each of your defects, so you could be sure you had them. Then again you may be wise and know all about your sore spots, and think the way to win is to hide them and let them go on eating out your heart. You may have thought you could cover them up with good clothes and smiles.

So if the superintendent made no mistake when he turned down your application, you will at once set about explaining to your friends what a mean man he was to treat you thus. You will make out an ugly case against him—prove that your religion, or the politics of your father, or prejudice guided

him in his action against you. In truth, your every action will be so small and contemptible that no further evidence of your lack of fitness for teaching will be needed.

Suppose, however, that the superintendent *did* make a mistake when he rejected your application—that you were the genuine article and he had misread the signs. What would you do then? There is only one thing you could do if the superintendent was mistaken. You would set about correcting his mistake. You would feel at once that he did not understand you. It would never in a lifetime occur to you to accuse him of prejudice or attribute anything but the highest motive to his actions. You could not do this, *because in your heart you would have no measure of human nature small enough to weigh that quality in your fellow men.* Your whole soul would be wrapped up in a desire to show him that you are worthy. In a short time he would be surprised to find you were not abusing him. He would expect you to do that because he thinks he made no mistake when he rejected your application. He would note at once, if you gave him a chance, that you were sweet-tempered and hopeful—that you could greet him pleasantly. This manner of yours would attract him and he would begin to wonder if he had not made a mistake. Each time he saw you this idea would take a stronger hold on him. “Here is a girl,” he would say to himself, “who is big enough and broad enough to see beyond her little sphere in life.” It

would not be long before you would get together, and you would get your own—all that's coming to you. You will always get it. Don't forget this important truth, that in the end we always get all we are entitled to have. If we fail to get what we desire, it is because there is a mistake somewhere. It may be so small that the span of a life is not sufficiently long to enable us to find it, but the fact that we fail is the proof thereof.



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